

Field-Based Year REFLECTION JOURNAL

A number of theorists and experts (Cruikshank, Dewey, Schon, Zeichner) have indicated that various types of reflection become a way of knowing about our actions. This learning through reflection facilitates our decision making, and further reflection provides us with a feedback mechanism whereby we can continue to improve as teachers. The purpose of this Reflection Journal assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to make a critical inquiry and reflect about your field-based experiences. The reflection journal also provides you a means of “conversing” with your college supervisor about those experiences.

For each time period specified by your college supervisor you are to make an entry in your Reflection Journal using the format described below (Posner). The sooner you commit your reflections to paper, the better the quality your responses are likely to be. These journal entries will be submitted to your college supervisor on the designated dates. Your college supervisor will respond to your entries each time the journal is submitted.

REFLECTION JOURNAL FORMAT:

A. HEADING

Include the date, your name, the school, the grade, your cooperating teacher's name, time spent, and number of students.

B. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Make a brief listing of all events during your time in the classroom (even if it seems insignificant.) (We really mean just a list, for example:)

1. Observed teacher do calendar time
2. Read to a group of 5 children
3. Assisted children with book making
4. Modeled use of context clues to whole class.

C. ELABORATION OF ONE OR TWO SIGNIFICANT EPISODES (What?)

An episode is an “event or sequence of events complete in itself, but forming a part of a larger one.” Select one or two episodes that are significant to you because what happened excites you, causes you to rethink an initial idea, convinces you that your initial idea was valid, or bothers you. Whether the episode you report was a success or a failure, it is significant if you learned something important from it. You are encouraged to focus on episodes involving content, instruction, and/or management. Variety in focus across the entries is encouraged.

Once you pick an episode, describe it in detail. Include what people said and did. Be specific. Try to avoid inferences/conclusions/feelings. State facts; don't interpret them.

D. PRACTICAL ACTION RESPONSE (So what?)

State why the episode was important to you and how you interpret it. Write about what you accomplished, problems that emerged, and how you followed up on them, and what you learned. This last point is the most important. You may have learned what works and what does not; if so, describe what you concluded. You may have learned something about planning for specific developmental characteristics. Whatever you learned, write about it.

E. ETHICAL/CRITICAL RESPONSE (Now what?)

Think about what questions remain unanswered upon reflection on this lesson. Reliving the experience will enable you to think about what you felt and thought during the episode, how you perceived the responses of the children and the cooperating teacher to your actions, and who or what contributed significantly to shaping the events. What will you do in the future as a result of your observation during this lesson?

As we respond to your journals, we will be looking for responses which fall into one or more of the following three levels of reflection (Van Manen, Zeichner & Liston):

Technical Rationality- REFLECTIONS describe what happened; focuses on events relying on personal experience and/or observations without due regard for a system or theory.

Practical Action or Contextual- reflections on WHY decisions were made; concerned with clarifying the assumptions and predispositions underlying competing pedagogical goals and with assessing the educational consequences toward which a teaching action leads.

Ethical or Critical Reflection- reflections on what SHOULD be; concerned with the worth of knowledge and the social circumstances useful students.

Questions listed below are presented to guide your thinking and not as a list which should be responded to at each entry in your journals.

1. What were essential strengths of the lesson?
2. What, if anything, would you change about the lesson?
3. Why was the lesson successful (or not successful)?
4. Which conditions were important to the outcome?
5. What, if any, unanticipated learning outcomes resulted from the lesson?
6. Can you think of another way you might have taught this lesson?
7. Can you think of other alternative pedagogical approaches to teaching this lesson that might improve the learning process?
8. Do you think the content covered was important to students? Why?
9. Did any moral or ethical concerns occur as a result of the lesson?