

## Five Types of Journals

There are at least five ways to keep a journal. A teacher researcher's journal may include all of the five types described below.

### 1. Personal journals

This type of journal is similar to writing diary entries. For the most part, this journal is like an open drawer into which a mixture of events and thoughts (without much organization) can be placed. It is useful to keep a personal journal as a vault for venting, for private celebrations, or simply to record events in an unencumbered way. The personal journal is for the writer only and may be used to hold brainstorming or other steps in the writing process.

To begin a personal journal, select a vessel such as a diary size notebook or a laptop. This should encourage writing and be a format that appeals. The writing medium needs to be portable and accessible. It can be too easy to avoid writing in a journal that is not on hand.

### 2. Response journals

The response journal is constructed to encourage thoughtful response to a variety of stimuli. Rather than simply recording unsorted thoughts or ideas, the teacher researcher identifies an impetus and then writes a controlled response to that.

An easy way to begin writing a response journal starts by creating two columns. In the left column, the teacher researcher relates the event which has generated a response. In the right column, reflections on the situation are written. This helps the teacher researcher isolate fact from opinion because the incident is recorded dispassionately while the response may well be full of emotion.

### 3. Reflective journals

In a reflective journal, the writer thoughtfully considers a personal experience and thinks about a specific topic. This journal type is introspective and examines the "big picture" of one's professional persona.

To begin reflective narrative writing, the teacher researcher can take a few minutes to write about a career event that made an impact. An explanation can be made about why the incident made a difference. The same exercise can be used to reflect on mentors, colleagues, books or resources that have had an impact on life as an educator.

Another useful strategy in reflective writing is the "A Walk In Another's Shoes" journal. The page in the journal can be divided into two columns. On the left, the incident is outlined in a factual way. On the right, the entry begins as if the writer was another individual involved in this incident. For example, after a difficult day with a student, a teacher's writing might begin a reflection using the sentence stem, "If I were this student, I would feel..." Sometimes looking at a situation from another context opens doors to new understanding.

### 4. "Pre-reflective" journals

Writing in advance of an event or incident can help the teacher researcher develop a framework for dealing with the situation before it happens. This can be helpful when preparing for presentations, before meetings of all sorts, or to test ideas for implementation. By writing down what is anticipated, the teacher researcher can learn about personal intuition, identify assumptions in a given situation, and begin to delineate educational values. Sometimes, rather than writing a paragraph, it is helpful to use prompts for writing. For example, consider using