



Viewing Guide: Teaching Strategy: Journals in a Reflective Classroom

Overview

In this classroom video, English language arts teacher Jonathan Dee introduces journaling to his students during the first week of the school year. A journal is an instrumental tool for helping students develop their ability to reflect, to critically examine their surroundings from multiple perspectives, and to make informed judgments about what they see and hear. Many students find that writing or drawing in a journal helps them process ideas, formulate questions, and retain information. Journals make learning visible by providing a safe, accessible space for students to share thoughts, feelings, and uncertainties. In this way, journals are also an assessment tool: you can use them to better understand what your students know, what they are struggling to understand, and how their thinking has changed over time. Journals also help nurture classroom community and offer a way for you to build relationships with your students through reading and commenting on their journals. Frequent journal writing also helps students become more fluent in expressing their ideas in writing or speaking.

As you watch, consider the following:

1. At 2:39, Mr. Dee has students work in small groups to share their journal reflections. Why do you think he does this? What is shared in these small groups that might not have been shared otherwise?
2. How have you used in journals in your classroom? What has been useful? What has been challenging? Does anything you see in this video address these challenges?
3. At 4:10, Mr. Dee discusses the concept of a “reflective classroom.” What key role do journals play in creating a reflective classroom?



In this video:

Jonathan Dee, teacher
8th grade, Cameron Middle School
Framingham, MA

Video Goals:

The purpose of watching this video is to:

- Witness how journals can be used from the first days of school to create space and time for student reflection.
- Consider how you might use journals in your own classroom.
- See the use of journals “in action.”



Lesson Resources:

- [Teaching Strategy: Journals in a Facing History Classroom](#)
- [Fostering a Reflective Classroom](#)