

## Dialogue Journal

A reflective journal is a required element for all Non-Tenured Professional Employees. One part of the protégé's reflective efforts will be to dialogue with their mentor via a reflective dialogue journal.

### Requirements

As a mentor, you are required to *initiate and maintain* a dialogue journal with your protégé throughout the year. The mentor must complete a **minimum** of 2 entries per month (an entry consists of posing a prompt to the protégé, receiving a reflective response from the protégé, and the mentor's reflective feedback to the protégé). Journals can be hand written (legibly) in a notebook or can be typed and kept electronically (i.e. via email). There is not a length requirement for entries, some may be short (less than a page) others may be longer (1 or 2 pages). Each entry should encourage the protégé to reflect upon his/her professional experiences.

**A copy of the mentor/protégé Dialogue Journal is to be submitted quarterly to the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Due dates: Nov 4, Jan 30, April 3, and June 9.**

### What is a Dialogue Journal?

A dialogue journal is a collection of "conversations in writing" between a mentor and a protégé. The goal of a dialogue journal is to assist in the protégé's professional development by asking him/her to think critically about his/her experiences and to provide an alternative avenue for addressing questions and concerns. Dialogue journals should provide a safe haven for highly critical discourse between peers. It is imperative for teachers to have high levels of mutual trust and respect for the process to be worthwhile.

Dialogue journals are professional learning tools based on the idea that writing promotes learning by allowing teachers to explore areas of personal and professional interest with a mentor. Journal entries give teachers the power to wonder aloud and connect in writing with the opinions of more experienced professionals, thus clarifying and reflecting on their own perceptions.

Dialogue journals can:

1. Provide a forum for the mentor to share his/her thoughts with a new employee.
2. Support and encourage personal and professional reflection about the art and science of teaching for both the protégé and the mentor.
3. Provide relevant insights into the transformations taking place with the protégé.
4. Provide a powerful tool to aid the protégé's pursuit of personal growth.
5. Allow mentors and protégés to experience the power of their own reflective thinking—thinking which can, and often does, result in new and better ways of teaching.
6. Provide the protégé with opportunities to develop a greater awareness and more knowledge about his/her professional practice.

### What should I ask my protégé to write about?

*Dialogue Journal Writing Prompts* have been developed to help mentors to identify topics that will stimulate reflection. These prompts can be modified to meet the needs of each protégé/mentor relationship.

Journal entries usually consist of either reactions to or reflections about events, people, or ideas related to practice. Reactive entries can be cathartic for the protégé, encouraging them to share their feelings. Reflective entries can help the protégé to be evaluative and analytical.

Encourage the protégé to reflect thoughtfully and critically through:

1. Vivid descriptions – Protégés should clearly indicate the who, what, where, why, and how of events/situations/experiences.
2. Critical analysis – Help protégé to break evidence down into parts and highlight surprising or puzzling issues, agreements, and disagreements between prior knowledge and any issues raised by evidence.
3. Planning for the future – Protégés should write about how their learnings have affected them and what implications it has for their future actions.

### How can I be an effective dialogue journalist?

Journal-entry discussions are more ambiguous than spoken conversations. Mentors should take care to word their entries in plain and constructive language. The following guidelines for responding to journal entries may be helpful:

- Read carefully!
- Write reflectively!
- Respond directly and personally.
- Be sensitive to your protégé's experience. Dialogue journals perform an affective function and thus require a positive tone.
- Offer constructive feedback.
- Be honest. Express honest opinions, share insights and reactions.
- Ask questions, prompt more reflection.
- Help the protégé to make connections and construct meanings.
- Maintain confidentiality.