

Literacy Strategy

Journaling

Allowing students to write in journals gives them the opportunity to express their own thoughts and opinions in a nonthreatening arena. While the activity allows them to organize their ideas with some freedom, guidelines for how the journal is to be set up and utilized is basic to successful use of journals. Presenting a general format to follow will help to eliminate writer's anxiety and give structure to journaling assignments (Vacca & Vacca, 1999).

Students are often motivated to go beyond the basic requirements of an assignment and explore other perspectives and possibilities for solutions to problems. Journal entries can be inspired by teacher prompts or student-selected topics. The information recorded in the journal can serve as a study guide or resource for other projects.

Types of Science Journals

(Note: See Literacy and Learning, Science Grade 8 video lesson for classroom illustrations of these science journals.)

Observation Journal (Field Journal)

The students and the teacher should negotiate about what observations are to be made, and what guidelines are to be established for recording in the journals. The format for entries, information to be included, when to record, etc., are topics that should be included in the preliminary planning for the observation journals. The students then visit the experiment and record their observations into the journal (or field notebook).

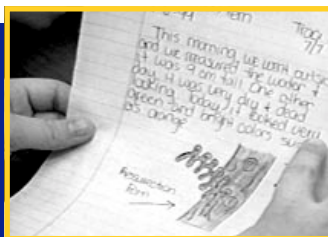
It is important to remember that journal entries do not always have to be charts or narrative writings. The use of illustrations in the journal is an effective way for students to clarify what they are reporting and is an excellent way to address different learning styles represented by students in every classroom.

Dialogue Journal

Dialogue journals offer an opportunity for two-way communication between teacher and student: on-going learning can take place through use of this process.

Assessment Journal

Students respond to teacher prompts, experiences, or self-selected topics. Illustrations may also be included. Students exchange journals between each other and critique them in a positive manner. This helps the students further understand the concepts being presented as they have an opportunity to see other student's work, ask questions of classmates, and offer positive suggestions to each other. Peer assessment of journal writing also helps foster communication between students.



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