

Preface

What can I do to improve my relationship with the parents of my students? How can I organize my classroom better so that I can find items quickly? How do I prepare my students for standardized tests? These are questions that you may ask yourself daily. Each of us is continually searching for new ideas to improve our teaching skills. Professional growth as a teacher is an ongoing process. There is always something new to learn.

Together, we have over 70 years of experience in education. We have designed this calendar journal to incorporate our experience and perspectives and to provide practical advice. We not only want to share our ideas; we want to provide you with the tools to set goals and to reflect upon your daily teaching experiences.

This daily planner/journal will motivate and support you through journaling and goal setting. In this day and age, teachers maintain busy schedules and keep closely connected to their calendars. By including a reflective component in a teacher planner, we invite you to consider your daily successes and challenges and to focus on goals to improve day by day.

In this planner, there is a space for every day of the year. One idea or inspirational thought is presented for each day, and space is provided for you to write down your thoughts and goals. Extra space is offered for more goal setting as well. You are invited to write about the high points of your teaching day and events that may inspire a change or new direction for the next day. We offer you a design and a process. We encourage you to view the events of your school day as they unfold. In so doing, we challenge you to not only fully involve yourself in each day's events, but also to look for occurrences that call for reflection, events that challenge you to redirect your teaching strategies, and dynamics in your day that give you inspiration.

We encourage you to step back at the end of each school day and notice not only the apparent and obvious events that have stuck in your mind, but also other things. While taking time to reflect, you will be giving yourself the space and opportunity to focus on the less obvious occurrences and to recall the impressions that you had but have not had time to really examine. For example, during the time routinely set aside for reflection, you will be giving yourself the chance to review nuances, subtleties, and signals

that were not noticed immediately. When you go back over the day, such messages come to you because by taking this specified time you invite them to come forth. Perhaps a child's wordless messages in the form of a facial expression will speak volumes when considered in the context of other events. Maybe an offhand comment made by a colleague will lead you to a realization that would never have surfaced in your busy day, yet results in a decision and direction important for you professionally. Something you see, hear, or "feel in your gut" may move to center stage during the quiet time that you routinely set aside for yourself. With this planner before you, your heart, mind, and personal insights and perceptions can aid you in finding your way, not only in your teaching but also in your relationships with students, parents, and staff.

This calendar journal is full of our best ideas to make your teaching more rewarding and to provide you with a daily system of support in your work. We want to encourage you to stay in the profession, and perhaps this calendar will be the bright and sunny pick-me-up to get you off to a good start each day. Not only does this calendar have a new idea each day based on a monthly topic, but it also provides spaces for goals and your "to do" list. We encourage you to take a few minutes at the end of each day for yourself and to reflect on the best thing that happened to you that day and your thoughts about the day's occurrences. We further suggest that you use the results of your reflection to influence your work for the next day.

Our hope is that this calendar will outline a path that is both broad and deep. As you begin to work the process each day, may you grow in the ability to access your best insights—insights that would have been lost if you hadn't given yourself the time to stop and reflect about your day. In so doing, may your ideas lead to further creative, unique, and effective offerings for your students. By listening to the teaching talent within you and processing your day, you are going deep within yourself to find the fullness of your teaching ability in order to present to your students ideas that will have a broad impact on them now and in the future.

This calendar offers you a new idea daily to improve your professional career—366 ideas are provided to assist you in your professional and personal life. Each month has a specific focus. For example, September focuses on getting to know your students, January focuses on preparing students for testing, and March focuses on maintaining motivation. We have focused on topics we believe teachers will find workable and helpful. You can adapt these ideas to meet your own needs in the classroom. The ideas are designed for a wide variety of grade levels. You may not want to use the exact idea but may want to utilize some variation of it. Perhaps one of our ideas will trigger many other similar ideas that you can utilize in your classroom and your life. There is an air of excitement for all of us when we get a new idea and try it in our classroom. We hope these ideas will motivate and inspire you to meet your goals.

viii Teacher's Reflective Calendar

We recognize that your goals do not remain within the confines of your classroom or even your school. As a whole person, you bring your fullest self into the process of teaching. While working with students, you may be thinking of picking up a prescription on the way home or exercising at the health club on the way to school. Items such as these can be placed on this daily schedule as well. Perhaps at the end of a difficult day, when you sit with the calendar, you may decide that you need to break a potential cycle of stress and commit to an early bike ride before getting ready for the next school day. Recognizing your personal needs in response to the school day helps make the school day more manageable.

When summer comes, you will still have the opportunity to see your personal life and your career life as a whole. This is part of the same concept. Ideas gained from taking a summer graduate class can be recorded in the calendar and easily accessed once you are teaching again. Perhaps while weeding the garden in July you will think of an idea to supplement a unit that you teach in January. Having this calendar available will help you remember to incorporate the idea when school is again in full swing.

When planning the upcoming day, it is critical that we contemplate what we want to accomplish that day—accomplishments that will make a difference in the success of our day as a teacher. Written goal setting is a skill that we want to teach our students, regardless of their ages. It gives them something to work toward. And then, at the end of the day, what a great experience it is for them to look back and see that their goals were achieved. We teachers must also set goals for ourselves. Writing down those goals makes it more likely that we will work to achieve them. The calendar includes a place where you can write down your goals. Daily goals may be added in the reflection spaces as well. We owe it to ourselves to begin our day with a goal in mind; we all need something to work toward. One goal might be to increase the use of praise with a specific student, or another might be to incorporate a mnemonic device into a social studies lesson. On Saturday or Sunday, a goal might be to read a chapter of an educational or inspirational book. There may be times that we are tempted to write that our goal is to just survive the day, but we need to resist this temptation and think of something meaningful to accomplish during each day—*what will make a difference in the life of a student?* Goals keep us focused, and when we have met our goals, we feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment.

You also have a place to make a to-do list. We always have a sense of completion when we can cross off items during our day. Making a list also enables us to evaluate how much we are trying to take on. If the list is too long, are there items that can be deleted or moved to a future date? However we choose to use a to-do list, it is a means to gain a sense of mastery over our work days.

When a year is completed and we have reviewed our days, a completed calendar can be used as a reference for the future. In fact, following one

school year with another reflective calendar reinforces the process you have begun. Having two copies of the month of March for comparison, for example, provides a record of how far your students have come in mastering certain concepts, your mood and energy level during this time of year, and even your plans for spring break renewal. Keeping a log of your professional life and its connection to your personal self, both your inner thoughts and feelings and the external events you experience, gives a sense of the fullness of your life. The calendar, both as a journal of your private reflections and a record of the events in your classroom and your professional growth, can become more valuable to you with use, application, and the collection of content.

Finally, we all have learned from our experiences—our successes and our failures. At the end of the day, we need to stop and reflect on the happenings of the day. This process causes us to take some time for ourselves, to pause and reflect, and to write down our thoughts. You may think that you don't have time, but remember, you owe it to yourself to take five or ten minutes to think about the successes and challenges that you faced. You may think that nothing has gone well during the day, but when you sit down to reflect and think about the good things that happened or an excellent lesson you taught, you feel better and feel that the day was a success in many ways. What a great way to end the day—on a positive note. At the end of the week or the month or the year, you will find it most helpful to review various days and see your reflections and what you learned throughout the year. Your legacy of experience will not only be beneficial to you but also to other teachers. What a rewarding experience to keep a journal and review it five years later and look at what happened during that time. You can see the professional growth that you have experienced—and have the opportunity to reminisce about years past.

To take the time to review our yesterdays, to reflect on today, and determine our tomorrows is a gift we can give ourselves that enriches our lives. When we see the events of life, both personal and professional, we realize that we are aware and connected to our world. We gain perspective from seeing the regularity of the positive gifts in life. We gain confidence and courage when we realize that we have managed stressful challenges with educated and mature choices and the application of our training.

We may feel stress in our everyday work, and writing down our thoughts is a great stress reducer. It assists us to compile our thoughts and to realize that maybe something that was upsetting during the day wasn't really that big an issue. We may also be able to gain more insight into certain events when we write them down.

Because a teacher's day is intense and busy, you may not always find the time to process the occurrences of a day that had significant impact on you. Sometimes it is by mentioning moments to others that we come to realize what really mattered in any given day. Yet because teachers get so

x Teacher's Reflective Calendar

busy and have so many demands placed on them, it can be difficult to really address the issues that truly mean something. We do not always have that ideal companion with us. But by using the reflective process in the following pages, you can reinforce your relationship with yourself and make this calendar a helpful professional and personal companion.

Those of us in the field of education must support ourselves—by journaling, taking time to learn from the experiences of others, and setting goals. Reflection will assist us to be the best educator we can be. We must also support each other—by sharing our wealth of experiences with those who succeed us. This calendar has been designed as that support tool. Read on for the wealth of ideas that are available to you—our offerings and legacy to you. Consider each day an opportunity to grow as a professional. We wish you a wonderful year full of successes in the classroom and in your life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Corwin Press gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following reviewers:

Mary Gale Budzisz
Retired Special Education Teacher
Pawleys Island, SC

Mary Camp
Special Services Coordinator
Peoria Public Schools
Peoria, IL

Thomas S.C. Farrell
Associate Professor
Brock University
Ontario, Canada

Laura M. Frey
Assistant Professor
Central Michigan University
Mount Pleasant, MI

Jennifer York-Barr
Associate Professor
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN