

# Dialogue Journals

To improve teacher-student relationships, have your students write in a daily or weekly journal and respond to their questions and responses on a consistent basis. The Greater Good Science Center run by University of California-Berkeley provides some suggestions to guide teachers in responding to their students' journal entries. Responding to every student on a daily basis may be possible for a teacher with a small, elementary school class, but as a whole this would be far too time consuming with all the other responsibilities teachers have to accomplish. It is recommended that teachers respond to students once a week if possible or switch between small groups of students every 3 or so weeks. Additionally the Greater Good Science Center provides some recommendations of how to respond to students, listed below:

- Acknowledge students' topics and encourage them to elaborate on their interests.
- Add new, relevant information about the topic at hand so your response is interesting to read.
- However, be careful not to over-respond.
- Don't overwhelm students with emotions or advice.
- Use positive reinforcement.
- Avoid glib comments like "good idea" or "very interesting." This cuts off rather than promotes dialogue.
- Take time to affirm and support each student.
- Respond to the content without correcting spelling and usage. Instead, model correct spelling and usage.

Because the nature of dialogue journaling may encourage students to share more personal concerns with you, it is important to seek appropriate help for serious student concerns. One teacher shared that if a student shared something that required the additional help of a school counselor, she would first talk to the student to make sure she understood the situation correctly and then let them know she needed to approach a counselor about the situation. She also offered to go with the student to visit the school counselor (Gonzalez, 2016). While it is important to remind students of the confidentiality of their journals within the classroom to allow them to be more open and comfortable with the activity, be wise in responding to student concerns and seeking appropriate help when necessary.

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<b>Grade Level:</b>	<b>Upper Elementary - 12th</b>
Materials:	Notebook, writing utensil
Duration:	3-5 minutes daily or weekly
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Keep journals in a designated spot in the classroom.</li><li>2. Decide what topic or question you would like students to address and write in at the front of the classroom.</li><li>3. Have students grab their journal when they walk in and write for 3-4 minutes.</li><li>4. At the end of the class, students return journals to designated spot.</li></ol>

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## Does it work?

Dialogue journals can be an effective tool to improve behavior and relationships of disruptive students. In a small study, the students in a behavioral intervention class were instructed to journal daily, however the teacher specifically responded to two particularly difficult students in the class over the course of the semester. These students improved classroom behavior and social skills, had more positive interactions with the teacher and improved student-teacher relationships (Anderson et al., 2011). A larger study of sixth grade students found that, in students with behavioral concerns, communication and social skills were improved, along with classroom participation (Regan et al., 2005).

Dialogue journals also are beneficial in allowing introverted or ESL students to communicate with the teacher in a manner they are more comfortable with. Jones(1991) shares the story of an advanced ESL student from Mexico who felt that writing was an easier way for her to communicate with her teacher, because she sometimes felt nervous and unsure of herself when speaking. Dialogue journals also allow quiet students to share concerns with the teacher they may not express otherwise (Gonzalez, 2016). While teachers may not establish a close friendship with all students, Jones(1991) asserts that they “rarely fail. . .to expand and deepen communication. . .[and] enable both parties to view each other with new understanding and respect” (p.104).

### References:

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Wellbeing*

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