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What Did I Learn at School Yesterday? Student Reflective Journaling as an Educational Practice

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Practice

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Abstract

This study investigated the occurrences of having students reflect on their learning by journaling, as well as the perceptions of this from students and their classroom teacher. Students received three mini lessons on reflective journaling before practicing reflective journaling independently at the beginning of their school day. While students completed their reflective journal entries, the investigator documented observations. Students completed a survey on their perceptions of this experience. Six student interviews were conducted in a one-on-one setting representing the demographic makeup of the classroom. In addition, the classroom teacher also completed a one-on-one interview. The qualitative data was analyzed using the constant comparative method to find themes, and the quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The researcher found a variety of positive and negative responses including the perceived impact of reflective journaling, the potential of reflective journaling on learning, and the limitations of the reflective journaling practice.

What Did I Learn at School Yesterday? Student Reflective Journaling as an Educational

Practice

The work that students do in the classroom each day is constant and imperative to their educational development. Students ceaselessly take in information, work to retain it, and practice their skills. The consideration of "education" itself can be understood broadly as the learning and abilities of an individual, gradually built over multiple processes. As a child's education is made up of numerous learning experiences, then, if those experiences become strengthened, would not a child's education also be strengthened? These are some of the ideas I had while designing this research study. I have a high respect for the work done in classrooms and have found ways that make the work of being a teacher meaningful for me. I wanted to also find a way to help make the work that students do in the classroom more meaningful to them.

Reflection is a practice that can serve members of any occupation. When we reflect, we do professional work of our own selves and experiences. In the field of education, it has been shown that being a reflective teacher refines one's service and improves one's effectiveness (Baxter et al., 2021; Tay et al., 2023). It allows one to critically think, analyze a situation, lower stress, and re-enter a situation with thoughtful consideration (Baxter et al., 2021; Tay et al., 2023). In recent years, many beginning and pre-service teachers have been studied for their practice of reflective journaling (Biberman-Shalev et al., 2022; Özüdogru, 2021; Romero et al., 2022). There is not, however, much research on reflective journaling as a meaningful practice for students. I wondered what happens when students, as members of the classroom, reflect on their learning experiences through reflective journaling.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine what happens when first grade students reflect on their learning by journaling before beginning their classwork each school day. I was also interested in learning more about students' and the classroom teacher's perceptions of how reflective journaling impacts a student's learning regarding their preparedness and motivation. To discover this, students practiced reflective journaling before each school day. Students were given their own page each day to complete their reflective journal entry on, and asked to reflective journal for five minutes independently. Before enactment students received three short mini-lessons on how they might reflective journal. During that time, guidelines were established and students had opportunities to practice. Following enactment, I investigated students and the classroom teacher concerning the following questions:

Research Question: What happens when first grade students reflect on their learning by journaling?

Sub Question 1: How do students and their classroom teacher perceive reflective journaling impacts learning?

Sub Question 2: How does one classroom teacher believe that reflective journaling encourages preparedness in their students?

Sub Question 3: How do students perceive reflective journaling to impact their confidence?

During the time of this action research, I was completing my year-long clinical teaching placement in a mid-sized Texas town with a population of about 127,000. I was placed at Cedar Elementary School (all names are pseudonyms), one of the elementary schools in the district. About 426 students attend this school with the following demographics: 4.9% African American, 21.8% Hispanic, 64.8% White, 3.1% Asian, 0.9% Pacific Islander, 4.5% multiple races. About

18.1% of the campus has been identified as economically disadvantaged; 13.8% are identified

under Special Education, and 2.1% are identified as Emergent Bilingual learners or English

Learners.

Literature Review

Writing is an ability that children are expected to develop over the course of their

academic careers. Rohloff et al. (2023) explain that writing can look very different in early

elementary classrooms. This depends on students' developmental capabilities as well as subject

and task. Rohloff et al.'s (2023) research demonstrates that young children with teachers who

support early writing activities have stronger writing skills at the end of the school year. This can

be accomplished commonly in young grades by drawing, scribbling, practicing letters, and

writing sentences. Any form of writing is beneficial to students, and developing these skills early

sets students up for success throughout their school years.

In addition to building competence in their language skills, writing in a variety of means

gives children a voice to communicate in authentic ways. Rohloff et al. (2023) argues that this is

a developmentally appropriate practice for young children because "not only do all children have

ideas they want to share, but from a young age, children begin to understand the relations

between oral and written language" (Rohloff et al., 2023, p. 1228). As these skills correlate and

improve upon other abilities, theory from Jean Piaget are evident. Piaget's schema theory

presents "schema" as the knowledge that individuals possess (Axelrod, 1973; Hall, 2000). Young

children are constantly taking in knowledge and building their schema while their minds

organize their schema, often described like file folders of information stored in our mind (Hall,

2000). From Kissner's (2009) experience in the classroom, she often worked with students to

activate their schema before beginning lessons. This led students to the ability to learn new

material and understand it well. Kissner's (2009) point was to get students to connect ideas they already knew to new information, thus, making learning a more natural process.

When authentic learning occurs, you can become the subject of your own learning, able to set personal goals and track your growth. Zuckerman's (2021) research values the recognition of knowing what you do not know, as well as what you do. Believing that "children can be taught to read, write, and count perfectly, they can even be made into experts, highly qualified specialists who can solve any problem within the bounds of their competence", Zucherman (2021) explains that this is done by exploring one's own competence, developing questions, and pursuing higher limits (Zucherman, 2021, p. 277). These same practices are involved in the act of reflection. Zucherman's (2021) study also revealed that student autonomy over their learning in this way is highly encouraging when students are equipped with the right opportunities. As students are given the daily opportunity to journal, they engage with themselves and the learning they have been studying. The forms in which this is done all offer an aspect of competence for students to learn.

In addition, research supports the reflective capabilities of students across disciplines as well as modalities. In this study by Pantaleo (2021), elementary grade students were assigned a classroom-based project where they read, discussed, and wrote about picture books during their class subjects including language arts, science, and social studies. Their objective was to create an "exploration poster", purposefully using picture images and text excerpts to orchestrate their posters to thoughtfully demonstrate an understanding and competence of the interdisciplinary work of social studies and science leading to change (Pantaleo, 2021). This assignment gave students the opportunity to reflect on what they were learning and develop visual meaning-making skills with both text and images. The results from this study support students'

ability to develop what they learn in the classroom in order to communicate their understanding and knowledge in a visual medium. Furthermore, this study showed the potential for students to do this while integrating multiple subjects and talents.

Considerations of having students utilize journals and reflection in the classroom may benefit them furthermore, beyond academics. A study was conducted asking students to keep a journal to document learning on science concepts. The results found that this had a positive impact on the students' affective characteristics related to the academic subject of science (Jeong & Lee, 2021). These included confidence and motivation. These findings from Jeong and Lee's (2021) study show that there is potential for journaling practice to emerge other skills, as well as spark student interest.

Included in these other skills, reflective journaling has shown potential for developing personal skills. Brooks (2005) proposed that drawing can operate as a unique mental tool, appealing to both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Brooks (2005) suggested that the ability of children to interact with drawing as a meaning-making process makes it a tool to link relationships between a number of concepts. In addition, Brooks (2005) extended this ability to also mean that children are led to engage with others because of their interaction with meaning and knowledge.

Based on the existing research, there are ample opportunities for students to write and develop in meaningful ways, as well as potential for reflective journaling to be an applicable practice. While many researchers support the ideas inspiring my study, there is not currently any research specifically investigating the occurrences of having students reflective journal on their learning. Furthermore, insight on the perceptions held around reflective journaling and its impact on students in the classroom will contribute to the current literature available.

Methods

The following sections describe how this research study was conducted. Before beginning enactment, all student participants were present for three short mini-lessons to prepare our enactment weeks. These lessons were given during the school day at the same time that students would later begin independently reflective journaling. The lessons were over different ways to reflective journal, including drawing pictures and writing words. The researcher introduced the reflective journaling practice, modeled for students what their process could look like, and gave students opportunities to begin practicing before doing so independently during the two enactment weeks. No data was collected before the two enactment weeks.

Participant Selection

This study took place during my year-long clinical teaching placement within the members of a single inclusion classroom. The participants of this study included a classroom of first-grade students and one classroom teacher. A parent information letter went home with students along with their permission form. Only students who assented and gave parental consent participated. Of the students who brought back their signed consent form and assent form, 11 were boys and eight were girls. There was one Indian student, three Hispanic students, one African American student, and 15 Caucasian students. The classroom teacher was a Caucasian female.

Data Collection

Over the course of two weeks, students had four minutes to journal before we began our classwork each school day. During that time, students were instructed by the same daily journal prompt, which was to "Tell me about everything you learned yesterday". It was made clear to

students that these journal pages would not be for a grade, but to simply reflect on the previous day's learning.

The students' journal pages completed during our journal time were utilized as a data source. Students each received an individual journal page for each day to complete a total of eight reflective journal pages. Writing samples were collected and analyzed at the end of the two-week observation stage.

As an observer, I took head notes during that time every day to document the occurrences of the first-grade students' reflective journaling. I focused on student engagement, task behavior, and actions committed during the four minutes each day. I fleshed these observation notes out during my conference period of the same school day. Over the course of our two weeks, I collected data recognizing student behaviors, actions, and engagement.

After the two weeks, I had students complete a Likert scale survey. This survey asked questions related to the students' perceptions of the reflective journaling practice. The survey included around five questions for students to complete.

Based on the data from the observation notes, the survey, and the data produced by the students from their journal pages, I choose a sample of students to interview. I used purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) to select two students that seem to have invested in the journaling activity seriously, two students that seem to have invested in the journaling activity moderately, and two students who seem to have invested in the journaling activity minimally.

I conducted a total of six interviews, meeting one-on-one with each student. These interviews lasted approximately five to eight minutes. I also interviewed the classroom teacher to investigate her perceptions regarding the students' reflective journaling practice. This single interview was conducted in a one-on-one setting, and lasted twenty to thirty minutes. All

interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. These interviews were semi-structured, with pre-planned but open-ended questions (Hendricks, 2012). Additional questions were asked depending on the responses of the participants.

Data Analysis

Data from the observation notes, journal pages, and interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method, with initial coding followed by creating hierarchies of categories and supporting codes (Hubbard & Power, 2003). This method involves sorting data into hierarchical categories to discover and organize recurring ideas and themes within all of the data (Hubbard & Power, 2003). I began by reading the first twenty percent of this data, highlighting key words and phrases and writing notes in the margins. These notes and highlights became my level 1 codes, which served to describe and begin to categorize the data. I used those level 1 codes to guide the coding of the remaining 80% of data. Once I had all of my level 1 codes, I began to group them according to related themes, which became my level 2 codes. I finished with three level 2 codes that served to synthesize the whole of my qualitative data (Tracy, 2013). I then indexed all of the information that belonged to each of my level 2 codes into 15 separate documents. While I was creating these codes, I wrote memos for each level 2 code to clarify and remind myself of important things in my research. I placed these level 1 codes under their level 2 codes in a codebook (see Appendix A), adding a definition and example of each level 1 code.

The quantitative data I collected from the student surveys were analyzed by frequency and measures of central tendency. The Likert scale responses from the surveys were placed into pie charts to compare what the most common answer was to each of these questions. This allowed me to find the general opinion of my entire study population.

Findings

The following section details the findings of my two-week study on the occurrences and perceptions of what happens when students reflect on their learning by reflective journaling. Quantitative data from the student surveys showed a mix of positive and negative feelings toward reflective journaling. Out of the seven Likert scale questions asked, three out of the seven questions had a majority of positive feelings, and the other four questions revealed that the majority had negative perceptions. Analysis of qualitative data gathered from observation notes, student journal pages, and interviews revealed three major themes. My findings include the following: student recall and documentation of learning, positive feelings and perceptions of reflective journaling, and negative feelings and perceptions of reflective journaling.

Student Recall and Documentation of Learning

Throughout this research investigation, students practiced reflecting on their learning by journaling. Although about 63% of students agreed that reflective journaling helped them see how much they learned, a majority of my findings revealed by students through their journal pages and interviews related to what it was that they remembered reflective journaling about (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Student Survey Response Addressing Memory of Learning
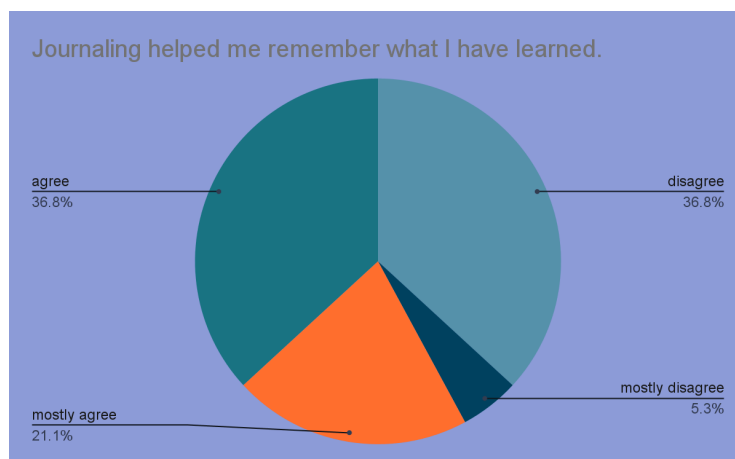
Note. This chart was created from the answers that students gave using a Likert scale response option.

From triangulating the data, it was found that students were able to record and reference academic content across subjects as well as events from school. This finding encapsulates the learnings, experiences, and concepts represented in student reflections.

Students recalled and documented learning of math concepts, ELAR concepts, experiences in their extracurricular activities, personal or event specific occurrences from their day, as well as the process they took to reflective journal. These things revealed data that helped inform the students' teacher of what they remembered learning, as well as what stuck out to them. From their interview, the classroom teacher even explained that through students' journal pages, she found it interesting to see what "they remembered from the day before".

From what the data showed about students' learning of math concepts, a significant amount of reflection on coins, their appearances, and their value was revealed. The coins identified were the penny, the nickel, the dime, and the quarter. Some students included historical images on these coins as well as the cent value of each (see Figure 2). In addition, students reflected on mathematical games completed in class and different math facts. This is all

appropriate data for students to have reflected on, as these were main concepts taught during the

three enactment weeks. The learning that was documented was also accurate.

Figure 2

Student Journal Page Showing a Penny Labeled "Lincoln", a Nickel, Dime, and Quarter
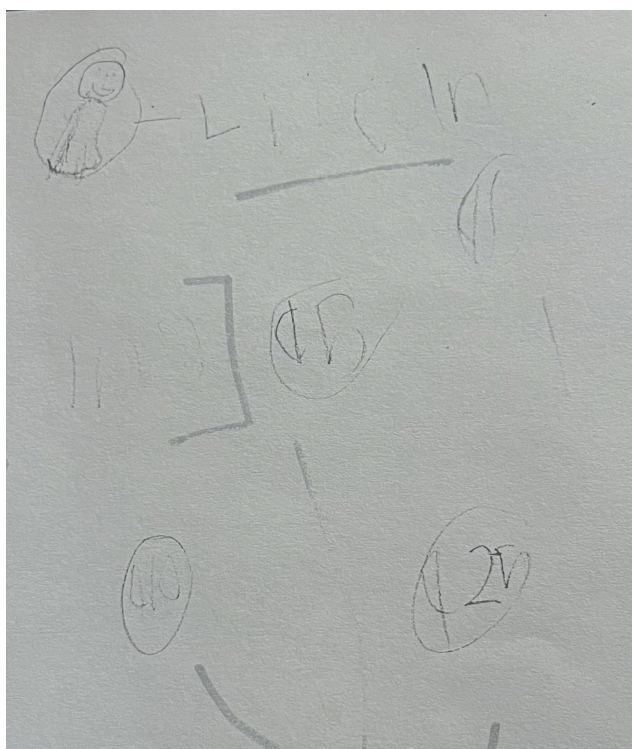
Note. This is a sample of one student's reflective journal entry documenting a drawing and label

of a penny, and both a drawing and cent value of a nickel, dime, and quarter.

Common ELAR concepts recorded by students included phonics and grammar rules, as

well as story books that we read in class. Data from the reflective journal pages as well as in

interviews revealed knowledge of the sound that "ay" makes, examples of open and closed

syllables such as "we" and "wet", and a number of spelling words such as "goat". Data also

revealed remembrance of a warm up activity teaching main idea. Three of the common stories

referenced by the data included folktales called "The Little Rabbit", "Stone Soup", and "The

Empty Pot", as well as a book titled "Snowmen at Night".

Another key subtheme from the data recorded by students about their recall of the previous day featured extracurricular activities. These included lunch, recess, PE, music, art, computer lab, library, and the use of Chromebooks. Many students reflected on games, activities, and friends that they sat with during these parts of their school day.

Data also revealed reflection of students remembering things that happened only on certain days. Significantly, this included the 100th day of school and many activities participated in on that day by the class. Some of these activities were 100-day games, outfits that looked like 100-year old people, and a snack bag of 100 snacks (see Figure 3). Furthermore, students reflected on specific things that related to them. This included sleepovers, friends and family members that they saw, accomplishments, and activities they ran after school. Groundhog Day was also documented as well as a day where the lights went out.

Figure 3

Student Reflection of the 100th Day of School
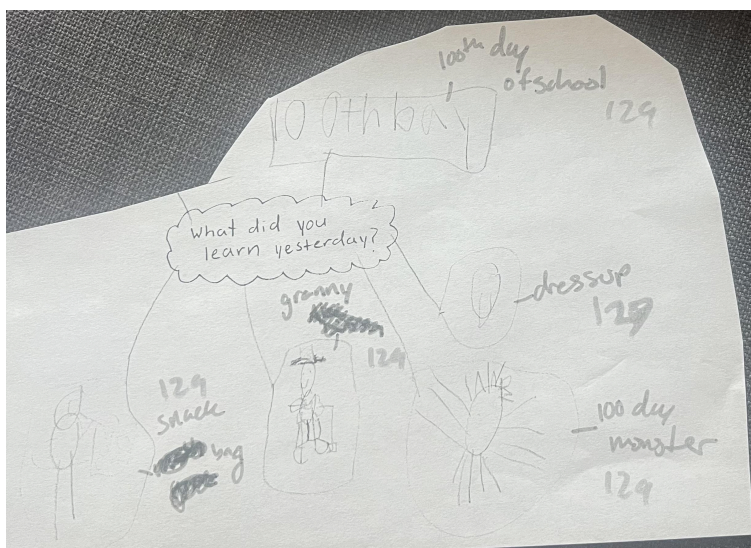
Note. This journal page shows student recall of the activities and celebrations of the day before.

Finally, students also reflected on their time reflective journaling in itself. Students remembered learning from the daily practice, and events that happened during our reflective

journaling time. This was a part of their day that they continued to talk about. Data from the field

notes and interviews also recorded occurrences of what physically happened in the classroom

while students spent time reflective journaling, and what that routine consisted of. This data

contributed to the findings of our main research question: What happens when first grade

students reflect on their learning by journaling?

Positive Feelings and Perceptions of Reflective Journaling

As confessed and confirmed by the quantitative data, the feelings and perceptions toward

reflective journaling took a variety of positions. We have taken a look at what it is that students

reflective journaled upon, now let us dive into the positive regards teachers and students had on

this process. This is the largest theme that emerged from triangulating each of my data sources.

Findings included feedback from students and the classroom teacher regarding positive feelings

and perceptions held toward reflective journaling as an educational practice. Throughout this

theme, data revealed noticings of engagement, motivation, the potential of reflective journaling,

and benefits of reflective journaling.

Starting with feelings, it was expressed that most students enjoyed reflective journaling

for a number of reasons including that reflective journaling provided a motivation to draw, an

appreciation of having time to think, and other positive opinions like it brought "fun". In

addition, participants believed reflective journaling to have an impact on their learning in the

ways that it made students feel proud of what they could remember and produce (see Figures 4

and 5). This provided meaningful information to address the first sub question that asked, How

do students and their classroom teacher perceive reflective journaling impacts learning?
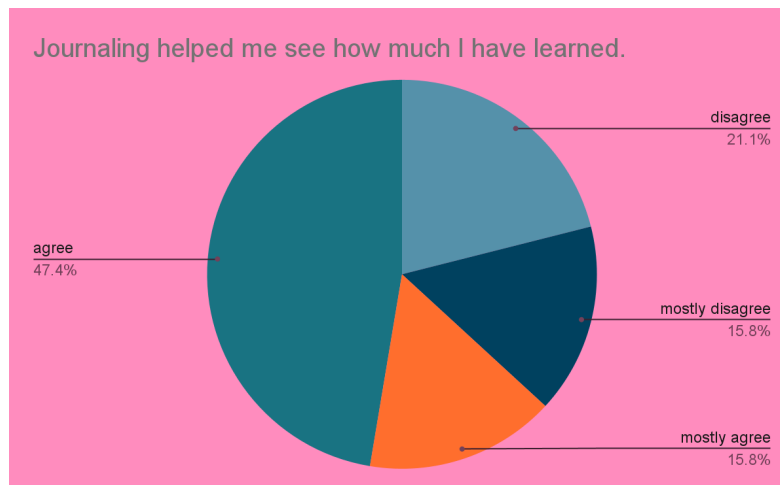
Figure 4

Student Survey Response Addressing Effectiveness of Reflective Journaling
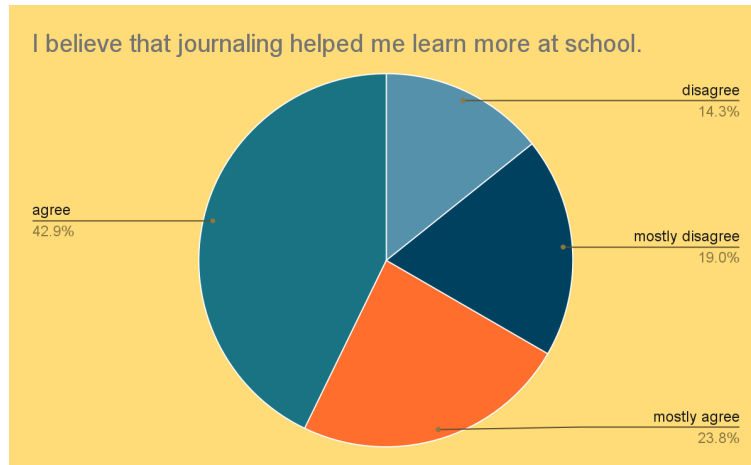
Note. The results from this data shows that the majority of students either agreed or mostly

agreed that journaling helped them learn more at school.

Figure 5

Student Survey Response Addressing Learning

Note. The results from this data shows that the majority of students either agreed or mostly

agreed that journaling helped them see how much they learned at school.

This impact was also noticed by the classroom teacher. In her own words, she stated that

reflective journaling was "helpful for them to carry over their learning from one day to the next

so it's almost like a review". Students themselves prepared for each day by reflective journaling,

and the reflective journaling practice prepared them to learn more. These findings contribute to

my second sub question: how does one classroom teacher believe that reflective journaling

encourages preparedness in their students?

From this investigation, perceptions of the effectiveness of reflective journaling related to

students' ability, the developmental appropriateness of having first grade students reflective

journal, and the informal assessment that journal pages can serve as, emerged. It was explained

by the classroom teacher that results from the journal pages showed her "what their favorite

subjects were because those are the subjects that we continually repeated", as well as simply

what they remembered from the previous day. This allowed her to readdress any misconceptions

that were revealed by students in their work. This also allowed the classroom teacher to see

which lessons that students enjoyed so that she could "make sure" that she kept doing that.

In addition, the classroom teacher shared her thoughts about students' abilities and

successes reflective journaling. When asked if she believed that reflective journaling was

something that students even at a first-grade level were capable of doing, her words were

"absolutely I think that they're capable of doing it". This was supported in a student interview

explaining that reflective journaling had become part of their "routine". Students began to predict

and expect to reflect on their learning by journaling which created a "motivation" as stated by the

classroom teacher. The classroom teacher also explained the following:

> I think for me as a teacher it just showed me that they can be quiet and have time to
>
> reflect, and I feel like it was very therapeutic for a lot of them because you come in it's
>
> very chaotic sometimes in the morning or the morning started rough or whatever. It was
>
> five minutes of quiet music. Think about what you've been learning. I think it felt like it
>
> prepared their minds for the day so I was surprised by that part of it, like just how

calming that was for them.

Students also revealed that they could have used more time while reflective journaling. When asked during interviews, four students said that they did not have enough time. In addition, these students recommended more time would have made them enjoy reflective journaling more. These findings show reflective journaling to be a practice kids are not just capable of, but can grow in.

Describing success at reflective journaling as "hearing your kids use vocabulary that you're trying to implant in them", she also reported developmental benefits of reflective journaling to include an appropriate academic pace. The classroom teacher said that "reflective journaling helped kids also start noticing patterns in their learning. Like we're building upon…" and that "there's ways to help them (students) start using reflective journaling as a pathway to connect their learning".

Furthermore, the data reveals support for reflective journaling to be an early literacy practice. The data documenting the occurrences and success of students practicing reflective journaling strengthen the positive opinions of reflective journaling contributing to students' early literacy skills. While reflective journaling, students continually built upon knowledge, interpreted writing and images, as well as produced their own writing and drawings. Reflective journaling was found to be an effective and relevant practice for students to participate in. In the final words that the classroom teacher chose to share, "I think reflective journaling is a win for all. Teacher and student".

To do this well, key components of executing successful reflective journaling also emerged. Reports from the classroom teacher as well as support from students affirmed key components that made our reflective journal time successful. These included practicing regularly

and over a long period of time, giving students the flexibility to reflect however made sense to

them, establishing a routine, and providing visual support. We accomplished this by having a

collective brainstorm as well as anchor charts existing around the room (see Figure 6). In

addition, a relationship aspect of learning was included in these findings. The classroom teacher

implied an increase in engagement from students when they know that you are going to

personally look at work that they completed.

Figure 6

Example of Collective Brainstorm with Visual Supports
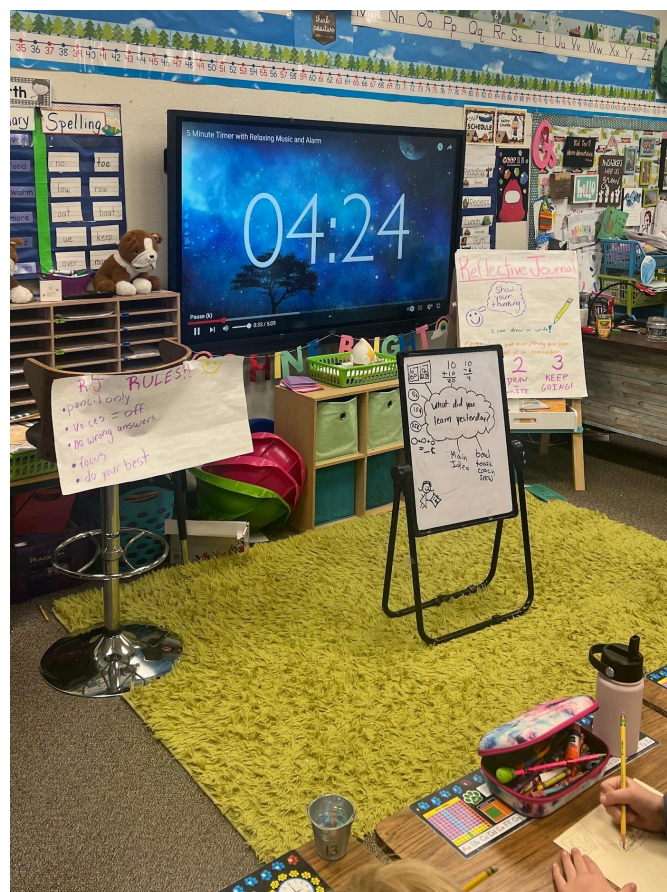
Note. This is an example of how I set up the classroom as students began to reflective journal for

the day.

As we will review in our next major theme, not all perceptions and feelings toward

reflective journaling were positive. The data mentioned along with this included solutions to improve the reflective journaling practice. This data came from both students and teachers, building upon the strengths that reflective journaling had in our experience, as well as solving some of the limitations felt. This component of the data showed reflective journaling to be suitable for differentiation, creative possibilities, and hold potential for other uses like literacy and informal assessment. Students shared that if they were to practice reflective journaling again, they would like to be able to use colored materials as well as have more time. Both the classroom teacher and a student suggested also trying reflective journaling at the end of the day instead of the beginning.

Further potential for reflective journaling also lies in accommodations that can be made to how a teacher executes reflective journaling in their classroom. This may include more than the amount of time given to reflective journal, but the actual format of journal pages, and the topic students reflect on. These components open the reflective journaling practice to accommodate different needs and purposes. The classroom teacher explained:

> I just think sometimes… first graders are little minds…have a hard time carrying some of that information over, and I think it's good that we have anchor charts around our room so they would either watch them use those a lot to pull and and that was really good and also maybe just like if you build upon the literacy part and making sentences…build their endurance to do that even a little bit longer overtime…I might have extended the time to help them keep journaling and build their endurance to do that because we're going to write a lot when they get older so that's a good a good skill to learn to start doing.

**Negative Feelings and Perceptions of Reflective Journaling**

Concluding, we must also face the other stance taken, being, the negative feelings and perceptions held toward reflective journaling. Even with the benefits and positive contributions of reflective journaling, the data did report negative feelings, limitations, or a dislike of reflective journaling. This was expected; it is important to keep in mind that not all students learn the same nor enjoy the same activities. This data revealed insight to the negative thoughts and feelings that students had toward the enactment of this reflective journaling investigation. These findings also may be included to help other educators identify areas about reflective journaling to either improve or remove.

Most commonly, the students who expressed negative feelings or perceptions toward reflective journaling mentioned that they did not know what to write, they did not have enough time to reflective journal, or that it was "boring". Observations were recorded showing students who spent their reflective journal time with their head and in their hands, complaining about having to reflective journal, and gestures of uninterest or a lack of participation.

Related to this, some students perceived reflective journaling to be ineffective regarding their learning at school. Surveys indicated that almost half of students leaned toward "disagree" when it came to statements describing their perceptions of reflective journaling such as if they enjoyed reflective journaling, reflective journaling helped students feel more confident, their likelihood recommending it to friends, and continuing to practice reflective journaling (see Figures 7 and 8). One student also revealed in an interview that they did not think reflective journaling had an impact on them, as well as their perception that reflective journaling to not make a difference in their day.
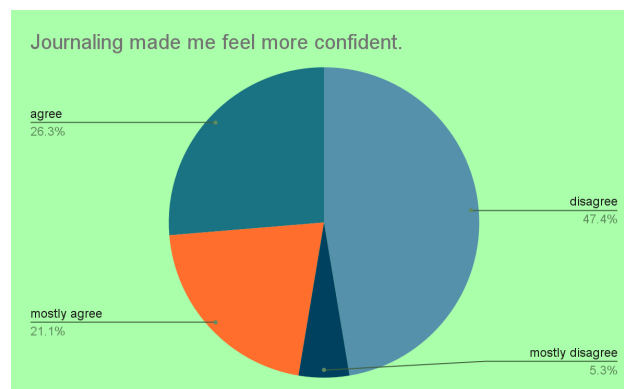
Figure 7

Student Survey Response Toward Enjoyment
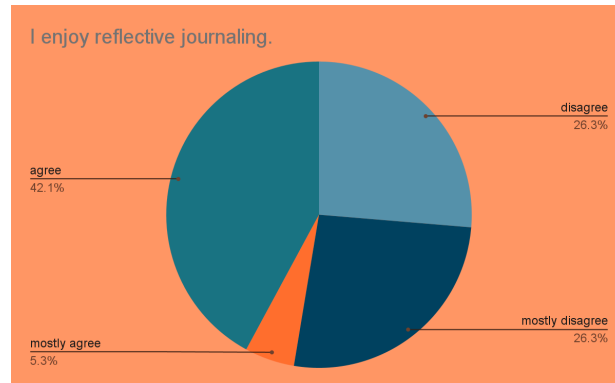
Note. The results from this data shows that the majority of students either disagreed or mostly

disagreed that they enjoyed reflective journaling.

Figure 8

Student Survey Response Toward Confidence

Note. The results from this data shows that the majority of students either disagreed or mostly

disagreed that journaling made them feel more confident.

There were also examples throughout the data that showed mixed feelings about

reflective journaling. Through interviews, some students who indicated a "disagree" answer later

changed their response after discussing it. Some students said that they did not personally enjoy

reflective journaling, but they would still recommend it to a friend because they understand how

it works for some people. There were other times where a student may have agreed or disagreed

with a statement about reflective journaling, but they could not express why. It was also revealed

by the classroom teacher that there are pros and cons about reflective journaling that depend upon your class. Observations also recorded inconsistencies with having students reflective journal. Each of these findings from the data can help teachers support their students if they are finding any of the same challenges.

Implications

During our enactment week, I taught three mini-lessons before beginning our two enactment weeks. To introduce reflective journaling, I showed students my personal journal that they have seen me keep notes in. I explained that the goal of reflective journaling was to think of everything that we know, write it down, and keep going. Together, we built our class "Reflective Journaling" anchor chart (see Appendix B) and established our "Reflective Journaling Rules" on a poster (see Appendix C). These two visuals were hung during each period of time that we reflective journaled. During this pre-enactment week, our class worked to establish our reflective journaling routine. This consisted of reviewing our two visuals, then brainstorming together what we were preparing to reflective journal on. Every time we reflective journaled, I wrote the prompt in the middle of a white board, and then called on students to give me ideas. This helped warm students up for our reflective journal time, and gave students who had trouble thinking of ideas some that they could use too. After we brainstormed, I passed out our journal pages (see Appendix D), and then as a class we all said our "reflective journal affirmation" together. Next, I started our five-minute timer and released students to reflective journal independently.

When I introduced reflective journaling, we first practiced by reflecting on the topic of dogs. I wrote "dogs" in the middle of our brainstorm page, and I let students tell me everything they knew about dogs. Afterwards, we repeated our affirmation statement, and students had five minutes to independently reflective journal and tell me more about what they could think of

regarding dogs. The next day, we practiced the same routine but reflective journaled on a story that we had read the day before. On our last day, we reflective journaled on the entire previous day. I ask students to think of everything they remembered learning and doing on the previous day. This launched our two enactment weeks. I would frequently pull exemplary reflective journal pages completed by students from this week, to encourage their best work as we continued.

Reflective journaling is a practice that has potential benefits for both teachers and students within the classroom. While to students, reflective journaling may be appealing for the features of drawing, thinking, and creating, teachers can discover even deeper services provided by the activity.

To begin, this study confirmed that students, even at a first-grade level have the capacity to reflect on their learning and journal their knowledge. While this activity may not teach students new information, the repeated exposure to academic content can help students remember what they have learned. Agarwal and Bain (2019) propose that students need to have regular exposure to the things they are learning "because once you've started to forget you have to work harder to remember" (p. 37). This reflective journaling practice strengthens the pathways created in their brains to access their learning, keeping the information fresh and in use. Furthermore, students gradually build on the concepts reflected on, affirming the foundations of their knowledge. In addition, reflective journaling can provide a sense of relevance for students because they begin to expect to recall their knowledge during the coming reflective journaling time.

Reflective journaling also showed that it can be considered as an early literacy activity. As the research supports, any early practice of thinking, spelling, writing, and drawing

contributes to students' success with literacy throughout their schooling (Rohloff et al., 2023).

During this investigation, students regularly represented their learning by writing and drawing,

labeled their images, and intentionally thought about their knowledge while building endurance

to do so. This is an ability that develops effective communication and creative thinking, as well

as mindfulness.

Reflective journaling also may be modified to fit particular purposes and uses within

classrooms. You may adjust the length of time that you have students reflective journal, the

prompt that you ask them to think about, the materials they are allowed to use, the time of day

they practice this, and the format of journal pages you expect students to reflect on. Through

these, a teacher may accommodate a variety of needs or abilities to support students in their

reflective journaling.

This investigation also discovered that reflective journaling can provide various modes of

assessment. It was reported that the classroom teacher found reflective journaling to be insightful

because it helped her realize what had made an impression on students, what they were able to

remember, and gave her an opportunity to correct any misconceptions that students had. Students

were also able to keep track of the things that they had learned, and turn back to the reflections

they documented. Throughout this investigation as well, the reflective journal pages that students

completed were often referenced. These findings support reflective journaling as a tool for both

students and teachers in the classroom.

All kids want to be heard. All students want a chance to share what they know and have

support in knowing more. All students want to feel proud about their work, and have tools to

communicate. Reflective journaling was utilized in this classroom as a way to build relationship

between students and their learning. I do not expect every student to get along with reflective

journaling the same as the next, nor should teachers be stagnant in how they execute this practice. There are limitless possibilities for how one may use reflective journaling in their classroom; my advice would be for teachers to keep their students at the center of their learning. As you have students reflect, let them lead the way in what they naturally remember and build upon the strengths.

Some further questions that emerged from this investigation include the occurrences and perceptions of other ways that classroom teachers may implement reflective journaling. This study focused on reflective journaling about the previous school day, but perhaps there is more to be said if the topic related to something experienced on the same day. What other impacts can reflective journaling have on students during their school day regarding their social-emotional skills? A limitation of this study was that we only had a total of three weeks where reflective journaling was practiced. There may be more to discover about utilizing reflective journaling as an educational tool over a longer period of time. The classroom teacher involved in this investigation said the following:

> I think that the longer you would have done it, I think that you would have seen them
>
> pick up even more of that kind of stuff because now we're hitting a part in our school
>
> where where they're really starting to apply the principles and things that they've learned
>
> all school year so you see them being able to give you even better feedback than maybe
>
> they would have at the beginning of this semester.

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Appendix A

Codebook

Student Recall and Documentation of Learning

Level II Name	Definition	Example
Student Recall and Documentation of Learning	This level II code includes the academic content recorded and referenced throughout the data sources.	Coin value drawings, books read in class, and theme days.

Level I Name	Definition	Example
Learning of Math Concepts	Any data that refers to mathematical content from the school day.	Drawings of coins, math facts, math games.
Learning of ELAR Concepts	Any data that refers to ELAR content from the school day.	Features of books read in class, phonics spelling, and grammar rules.
Experiences in Extracurricular Activities	Any data that refers to extracurricular activities during the school day.	Reflections from lunch, recess, PE, music, and art.
Day or Event Specific Memories	Any data that refers to holidays, theme days, and personal experiences.	The 100th day of school, groundhog day, fun-day Friday, computer lab, and chromebooks
The Process or Occurrences of Reflective Journaling	Any data that describes the process or events of our reflective journal time.	Journal drawings of students reflective journaling, field notes of actions, interview descriptions of reflective journaling.

Positive Feelings and Perceptions of Reflective Journaling

Level II Name	Definition	Example
Positive Feelings and Perceptions of Reflective Journaling	This level II code includes positive feelings and perceptions by both students and the teacher toward reflective journaling throughout the data sources.	Noticings of engagement, motivation, and benefits of reflective journaling.

| Level I Name	Definition	Example
Positive Feelings Toward Reflective Journaling	Any data that showed positive feelings toward reflective journaling in class.	Participants recommending reflective journaling to others, and enjoying it themselves
Positive Impacts of Reflective Journaling	Any data that showed positive impacts from having students reflective journal in class.	Expressions and noticings of the benefits of reflective journaling
Students' Success and Potential Practicing Reflective Journaling	Any data highlighting success at reflective journaling, and the capability students possess to reflective journal well.	Correct use of vocabulary and documentation of learning
Teacher Insights From Having Students Reflective Journal	Any data revealed by the teacher participant about the strength of reflective journaling in her class.	Informal assessments and emerging interests of students
Reflective Journaling as an Early Literacy Practice	Any data revealing the potential of reflective journaling as an effective early literacy practice.	Benefits of writing and drawing, reading, and interacting with material
Key Components to Successful Reflective Journaling	Any data mentioned by participants about what made reflective journaling a positive experience.	Establishing a routine, practicing over time, utilizing anchor charts
Solutions to Improve Reflective Journaling Time	Any data discussion possible solutions to limitations identified about reflective journaling.	Having more time, being able to use color

Negative Feelings and Perceptions of Reflective Journaling

Level II Name	Definition	Example
Negative Feelings and Perceptions of Reflective Journaling	This level II code includes negative feelings and perceptions by both students and the teacher toward reflective journaling throughout the data sources.	Mentioned feelings of a dislike for reflective journaling

| Level I Name	Definition	Example
Struggles with Reflective Journaling	Any data revealing frustrations, limitations, or struggles had by participants while reflective journaling.	Not having enough time, not being able to think, wanting to do something else
Student Perceived Ineffectiveness of Reflective Journaling	Any data disregarding the impact of reflective journaling.	No difference in feelings, preparedness, or motivation from reflective journaling
Mixed Feelings About Reflective Journaling	Data that somewhat values reflective journaling, but mostly is indifferent.	A participant does not personally like reflective journaling but still would recommend others to try it

Appendix B

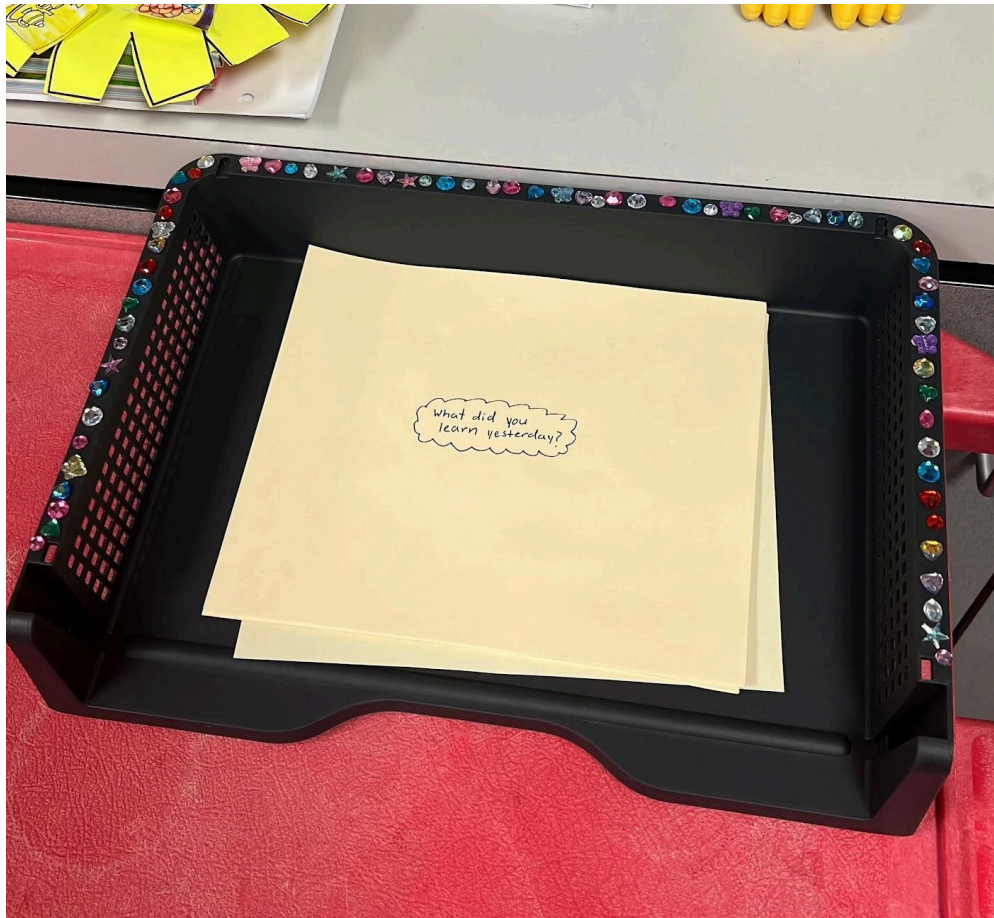**Our "Reflective Journal" Anchor Chart**
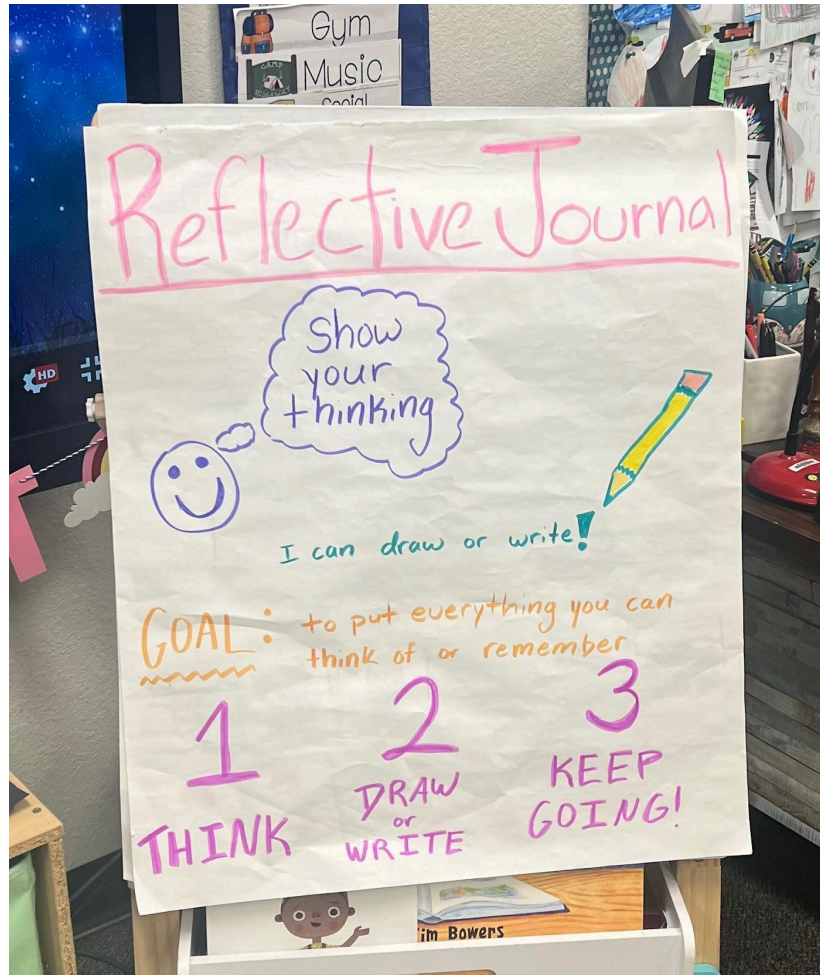
Appendix C

Our Reflective Journaling Rules
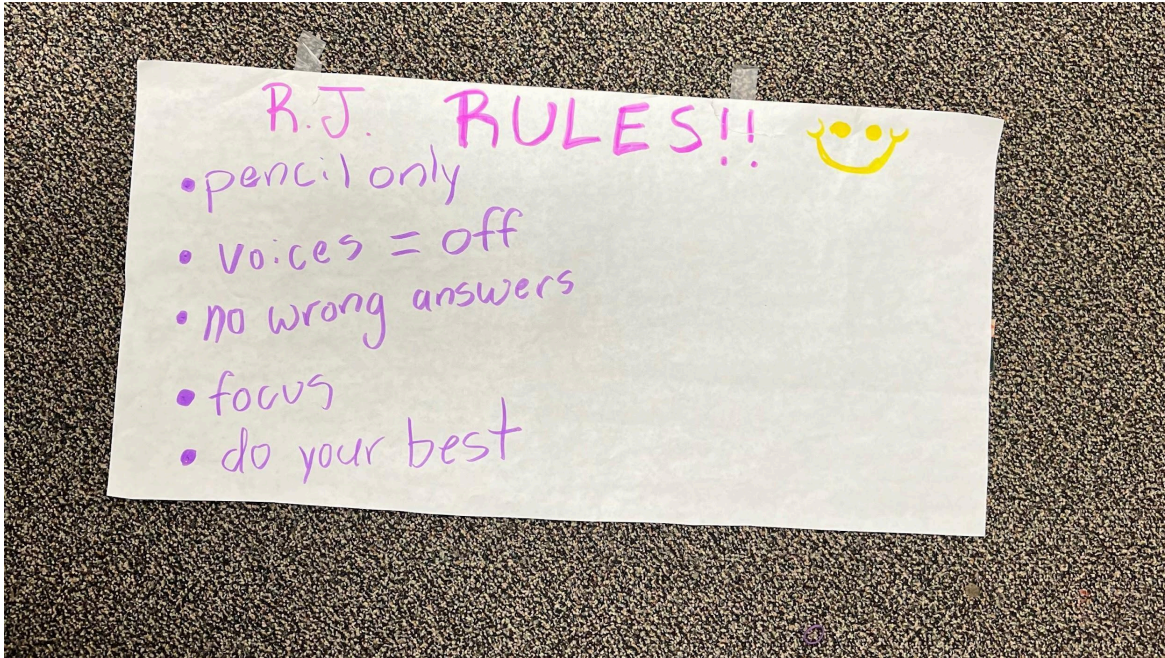
These are the reflective journaling rules that the class came up with together, discussed, and followed for reflective journaling time.

Appendix D

Reflective Journal Pages

This is a photograph of the class's turn-in bin along with the unused reflective journal pages.

Notice that the designated bin and colored pages made the materials used for reflective

journaling more interesting for students.