

# Learning to Think Like a Teacher: Reflective Journals for Legal Educators

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My commitment to keep a teaching journal was not the result of extensive research or reflective thought. It arose in an unguarded moment in a public setting when my mouth moved faster than my brain. Fortunately, that impulsive moment led to a habit that benefits my professional and personal life as well as my students' learning.

It happened like this. On a beautiful autumn afternoon at the Sleeping Lady retreat center in Washington's Cascade Mountains, I was co-facilitating

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a workshop on teaching for a group of legal educators.<sup>1</sup> We were discussing the use of writing as a vehicle for active learning. The participants, clinical teachers from the Northwest, enthusiastically endorsed the idea of requiring students in clinics to keep journals about their work. The long list of impressive benefits of journal writing for students included promoting self-awareness and reflection, enhancing learning from experience, releasing stress, and developing lifelong self-directed learning habits. I asked the participants whether they had used journal assignments with law students. All twenty-five teachers raised their hands. It struck me that journal writing could have tremendous advantages for teachers, so I also asked how many of the participants kept a journal about their teaching. Only one participant raised her hand. I said to the participants that I would commit, right then, to keep a teaching journal for the next few months.

Those words left my mouth three years ago. I had no prior experience with journal writing and had done no research on reflective practice at that time. I just bought a journal and started to write. Through the simple process of writing in my journal twice a week I have experienced the advantages of journal writing described by the participants and many other benefits as well.

This Article is built on the extensive literature about reflective journals and my experience writing a teaching journal. Part I addresses the role of reflection in the education of professionals, including teachers. Part II focuses on reflective journals as devices for the professional development of teachers. Finally, Part III contains recommendations for law teachers who want to enhance their teaching by keeping a reflective journal.

## I. REFLECTION AND THE EDUCATION OF PROFESSIONALS

Teachers and lawyers are members of professions, both of which face the common challenges of educating students to assume their professional roles and continuing professional development. Most legal educators are members of both professions; they are lawyers and teachers. One key to the education and development of professionals is reflection.

### A. *Reflective Professionals*

The scholarship of Donald Schön, in particular his book *Educating the*

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1. My co-facilitator was Paula Lustbader (Seattle University School of Law). The workshop, "Seven Principles of Good Practice for Clinical Legal Education," was part of the Northwest Clinicians Conference in September, 1999.

*Reflective Practitioner*,<sup>2</sup> has established a groundwork for the education of professionals. Schön's work is cited frequently in clinical legal education literature.<sup>3</sup> In the teacher education field, Schön has inspired a movement to emphasize the development of reflective teachers.<sup>4</sup> Two of Schön's constructs are especially relevant to legal and teacher education: theories of professional behavior and kinds of reflection.

According to Schön, professionals employ two types of theories of action to explain their behavior.<sup>5</sup> Theories of action include the values, strategies, and underlying assumptions that affect behavior.<sup>6</sup> Professionals have espoused theories to explain or justify behavior (e.g., a teacher informs the class that one of the teacher's primary goals is to help each student succeed in the course).<sup>7</sup> However, espoused theories often conflict with theories-in-use, which are implicit in the professional's behavior (e.g., the teacher is difficult to contact outside of class, does not know the students' names, and provides no opportunity for feedback to students during the course).<sup>8</sup> People often are unaware of their theories-in-use and are surprised to discover that they conflict with their espoused theories.<sup>9</sup> One reason for this lack of awareness is that much of what professionals know and can do is tacit—the person can exhibit excellent performance without being able to explain how to do it.<sup>10</sup> To

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2. DONALD A. SCHÖN, *EDUCATING THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER: TOWARD A NEW DESIGN FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE PROFESSIONS* (1987).

3. Richard K. Neumann, Jr., *Donald Schön, The Reflective Practitioner, and the Comparative Failures of Legal Education*, 6 *CLINICAL L. REV.* 401 (2000) (explaining Schön's work and applying it to legal education). Footnotes one through three contain references to more than twenty journal articles concerning clinical legal education that cite Schön. *Id.* at 401-02 nn.1-3.

4. See, e.g., Dawn Francis, *The Reflective Journal: A Window to Preservice Teachers' Practical Knowledge*, 11 *TEACHING & TCHR. EDUC.* 229, 230 (1995); Karen F. Osterman, *Reflective Practice: A New Agenda for Education*, 22 *EDUC. & URB. SOC'Y* 133, 133-37 (1990); John Smyth, *Developing and Sustaining Critical Reflection in Teacher Education*, 40 *J. TCHR. EDUC.* 2, 2-3 (1989).

5. See SCHÖN, *supra* note 2, at 255-56.

6. *Id.* at 255.

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.* at 255-56.

9. *Id.*

10. See SCHÖN, *supra* note 2, at 22-25, 255-56. Schön described several types of professional knowledge. See *id.* at 32-36. Competent professionals can solve many "problem[s] by [the] routine application of facts, rules, and procedures" of an area of practice. *Id.* at 33-34. For example, a lawyer can draft a stipulation for dismissal when a case settles or a teacher can prepare a quiz to assess students' comprehension. When a problem is more complex, the practitioner proceeds through a characteristic reasoning process, "thinking like a lawyer" or "thinking like a teacher." *Id.* at 34. For instance, a law student or lawyer finds and applies law and policy to make an argument in support of a summary judgment motion

illustrate, an important skill for lawyers and teachers is to build rapport with clients and students, but it is difficult to fully explain how to establish and maintain rapport.

Reflection can help professionals understand their theories of behavior and articulate their professional knowledge. Reflection can be spontaneous (reflection-in-action) or retrospective (reflection-on-action).<sup>11</sup> Reflection-in-action occurs when a professional encounters a surprising situation in which routine methods and reasoning do not apply; the practitioner looks critically at assumptions, rules, procedures, or ways of framing the problem. The critical reflection then results in “on-the-spot experiment[s]” in which the practitioner tries new methods and tests new understanding.<sup>12</sup> For example, teachers in class are asked questions they have not considered before; their reflection on the questions leads them to new insights and their responses to the questions test the new insights and raise questions about underlying assumptions about the topic. Reflection-on-action occurs when a person looks back at an event or behavior.<sup>13</sup> Reflection-on-action can help professionals become more skillful by allowing them to consolidate understanding, invent new solutions, and apply that new knowledge in future situations.<sup>14</sup> In addition, reflection-on-action can reveal to practitioners the conflict between their espoused theories and their theories-in-use.<sup>15</sup> The focus of the remainder of this Part is this retrospective kind of reflection.

### B. *Reflective Teachers*

In the context of teacher education, researchers and scholars have defined reflection and identified levels and stages of reflection.

#### 1. Definitions of Reflection

Looking to the work of John Dewey in the 1930s, teacher educators define

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or a teacher reviews a practice essay exam to identify strengths and weaknesses in the student’s analysis. At another level, when responding to ambiguous or surprising situations a professional can exhibit artistry by going beyond the available facts, rules, and procedures and constructing new ways of framing the problem, novel theories, and alternative methods of reasoning. *Id.* at 35. For example, lawyers find creative ways to resolve a business dispute to preserve the ongoing relationship of the parties or a teacher develops a simulation to help students learn at a deeper level.

11. *See id.* at 26.

12. *See id.* at 26-29.

13. *See id.* at 26.

14. *See id.* at 31.

15. *See* SCHÖN, *supra*, note 2, at 256.

reflection as an “active, persistent, careful consideration of any belief or ... knowledge in light of the grounds supporting it.”<sup>16</sup> Reflection involves the direct experience of a situation; thoughtful examination of existing beliefs, knowledge, or values; and the systematic contemplation of observations and potential actions.<sup>17</sup> Attributes of reflective people include (1) open-mindedness (a willingness to consider new evidence and alternative views and to question firmly held beliefs), (2) responsibility (a desire to search for truth and to apply new insights to problems), and (3) wholeheartedness (the ability to critically evaluate ourselves, students, and education to make meaningful change).<sup>18</sup>

Stephen Brookfield, a leading adult educator, defines reflection as the process of hunting assumptions.<sup>19</sup> Teachers’ assumptions are their “taken-for-granted beliefs about the world and [their] place within it.”<sup>20</sup> Brookfield articulates three types of assumptions that reflection can address.<sup>21</sup> Paradigmatic assumptions are used by teachers to create “fundamental categories” (“adults are self-directed learners”).<sup>22</sup> Prescriptive assumptions are held by teachers about how they should behave, what educational methods are effective, and what their relationships should be with students (“Students should be involved in the design of their courses.”).<sup>23</sup> Casual assumptions help teachers to understand how the world works and to predict the effects of educational practices.<sup>24</sup> (“If teachers use learning contracts, students will become more self-directed in their learning.”) A central part of the reflective process is for teachers to identify their assumptions, investigate their hidden dimensions, and view them from a variety of perspectives.<sup>25</sup>

16. Francis, *supra* note 4, at 230; *see also* Deborah S. Yost et al., *An Examination of the Construct of Critical Reflection*, 51 J. TCHR. EDUC. 39, 39 (2000). Both works cite J. DEWEY, *HOW WE THINK: A RESTATEMENT OF THE RELATIONS OF REFLECTIVE THINKING TO THE EDUCATIVE PROCESS* (2d ed. 1933).

17. *See* Francis, *supra* note 4, at 230.

18. *See* Yost et al., *supra* note 16, at 39-40.

19. STEPHEN D. BROOKFIELD, *BECOMING A CRITICALLY REFLECTIVE TEACHER* 2 (1995).

20. *See id.*

21. *Id.* at 2-3.

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.* at 3.

24. BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 3. “If teachers use learning contracts, students will become more self-directed in their learning.” *Id.*

25. *Id.* at 7. Another conception of reflection in the education context is “the ability [of teachers] to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices.” Dorene Doerre Ross, *First Steps in Developing a Reflective Approach*, 40 J. TCHR. EDUC. 22, 22 (1989). In this model, the reflective process involves:

- “Recognizing an educational dilemma,”
- Comparing the dilemma to other situations while recognizing the unique

## 2. Types of Reflection

Max Van Manen described three levels of reflection,<sup>26</sup> which have been refined in subsequent teacher education literature. The first level is technical.<sup>27</sup> It is concerned with the “application of skills and technical knowledge in the classroom.”<sup>28</sup> This level of reflection is focused on analyzing the effects of teaching techniques. Relevant questions would be: What techniques are most and least effective in the classroom? What problems need the most attention?, and What potential approaches exist to deal with the problems?<sup>29</sup>

The second level of reflection is conceptual.<sup>30</sup> “[T]eachers strive to understand the theoretical basis for classroom practice,” to explore the consequences of various methods on student learning, and to make their espoused theories of behavior match their theories-in-use.<sup>31</sup> Appropriate questions include: Is the teacher’s educational philosophy consistent with classroom conduct?, What are the theoretical bases for the methods employed in the classroom?, What are the effects of those practices on student learning?, and, Is the teacher’s educational philosophy consistent with classroom conduct?<sup>32</sup>

The third level is critical reflection.<sup>33</sup> Here, teachers examine the moral and ethical implications of their decisions.<sup>34</sup> “[T]eachers make connections between [their actions] and the broader social, political, and economic forces” that

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- characteristics of the present situation,
  - “Framing and reframing the dilemma,”
  - “Experimenting . . . to discover the consequences and implications of various solutions,” and
  - Evaluating the solutions based on their consequences.

*Id.*

26. See Max Van Manen, *Linking Ways of Knowing with Ways of Being Practical*, 6 CURRICULUM INQUIRY 205, 226-27 (1977).

27. Thomas J. Lasley, *Promoting Teacher Reflection*, J. STAFF DEV., Winter 1992, at 24, 25; Yost et al., *supra* note 16, at 40.

28. Yost et al., *supra* note 16, at 40.

29. Lasley, *supra* note 27, at 25.

30. *Id.*

31. *Id.* at 25-26; see also Yost et al., *supra* note 16, at 40.

32. See Lasley, *supra* note 27, at 25.

33. Kenneth M. Zeichner & Daniel P. Liston, *Teaching Student Teachers to Reflect*, 57 HARV. EDUC. REV. 23, 25 (1987).

34. See *id.*

affect education.<sup>35</sup> Applicable questions are: What educational goals and methods lead to justice and equity? and How should schools be changed to meet “important human needs?”<sup>36</sup>

John Smyth divides reflection into four stages:

- Describing. “[W]hat do I do?” At this stage, teachers reflect about their own teaching practices. They describe concrete teaching events, including their reactions to situations that are confusing or contradictory.
- Informing. “[W]hat does this mean?” Teachers analyze the descriptions of their teaching to uncover their theories-in-use. They identify the underlying principles that inform and shape their teaching.
- Confronting. “[H]ow did I come to be like this?” At this level, teachers subject their theories and teaching principles to examination. They identify the assumptions and values that underlie their practices and theories. Teachers explore the social and political forces that affect their professional lives. They examine who benefits from the current teaching methods.
- Reconstructing. “[H]ow might I do things differently?” Teachers who have engaged in describing, informing, and confronting are prepared to act as agents of change. They can make informed choices about their own teaching theories and methods. Reflective teachers can facilitate positive change in the education system as well.<sup>37</sup>

### C. *Reflection Benefits and Pitfalls*

The benefits of reflection for teachers include increasing self-awareness, developing a teaching rationale, making informed change, and integrating personal and professional life. But reflection has potential pitfalls as well. It can challenge teacher confidence, overwhelm teachers with complexity, and frustrate them with the slow pace of change.

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35. See Yost et al., *supra* note 16, at 40.

36. Zeichner & Liston, *supra* note 33, at 25. Brookfield defines reflection as critical when it has two purposes: (1) “to understand how consideration of power undergrid, frame, and distort educational processes” and (2) “to question assumptions . . . that seem to make [ ] teaching [ ] easier but actually work against [teachers’] best long-term interests.” BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 8.

37. Smyth, *supra* note 4, at 5-7.

## 1. Reflection Benefits for Teachers

*Increasing Self-Awareness.* Most teachers have deeply ingrained assumptions about teaching and learning,<sup>38</sup> which affect the teachers' day-to-day behavior in the classroom.<sup>39</sup> Professional growth occurs when teachers eliminate or modify old ideas that shape behavior and replace them with new ideas. The first step for teachers to make change is to identify their current assumptions and behavior that may be hindering their effectiveness.<sup>40</sup> Reflection can help teachers take this first step by posing questions about their own behavior.<sup>41</sup> Reflection can reveal patterns of behavior, habitual responses, and underlying motivations.<sup>42</sup> It can help educators identify the aspects of their professional performance that need improvement.<sup>43</sup>

*Developing a Teaching Rationale.* In addition to identifying problematic assumptions and behaviors, it is important for teachers to articulate effective practices and ideas.<sup>44</sup> Even master teachers often have trouble explaining the strategies, attitudes, and behaviors that lead to their success in the classroom.<sup>45</sup> Reflective practice can help teachers reveal their tacit knowledge and skill.<sup>46</sup> Reflective teachers are better able to explain the rationale behind their teaching.<sup>47</sup> That rationale, based on experience and reflection, can give teachers a firm grounding and confidence. It can help guide teachers' behavior when they encounter new problems and unpredictable situations in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers can enhance their credibility by communicating their rationale to colleagues and students.<sup>48</sup>

*Making Informed Change.* As a result of examining assumptions and developing a rationale, reflective teachers modify their plans, attitudes, and actions in the classroom.<sup>49</sup> Teachers, students, and institutions can benefit from these changes.<sup>50</sup> Reflective teachers engage in a continual process of reviewing their ideas and experience followed by experimentation with new methods to

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38. See Osterman, *supra* note 4, at 135-37.

39. See *id.* at 136-37.

40. See *id.* at 135.

41. See *id.* at 137. Questions such as "What am I doing?" and "Why am I doing it?" should be asked when reflecting. See *id.*

42. *Id.*

43. Osterman, *supra* note 4, at 137.

44. *Id.* at 138.

45. *Id.* at 137-38.

46. See *id.* at 138.

47. See *id.*

48. See BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 22-23.

49. See *id.* at 22-25.

50. See *id.*; Osterman, *supra* note 4, at 140.

engage students.<sup>51</sup> Teachers can model critical reflection by openly questioning their own assumptions, articulating their rationale for their actions, and explaining to students the changes they make in their pedagogy. Students profit not only from the methods designed to increase their learning, but also by witnessing teachers whose espoused theories are consistent with their actions.<sup>52</sup> Students learn about critical thinking by experiencing the process and results of their teachers' reflection.<sup>53</sup> Finally, organizations, including schools, are most effective when people inside the organization scrutinize organizational behavior, challenge existing practices, and search for better ways of doing things.<sup>54</sup>

*Integrating Personal and Professional Life.* The reflection process encourages teachers to explore their personal and professional lives and the connections between them. Parker Palmer, an advocate of reflective teaching practices, makes the case that the primary path to professional development for teachers is self-understanding.<sup>55</sup>

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.

In fact, knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. I will see them through a glass darkly, in the shadows of my unexamined life—and when I cannot see them clearly, I cannot teach them well. When I do not know myself, I cannot know my subject—not at the deepest levels of embodied, personal meaning.<sup>56</sup>

Although reflection can lead teachers to greater self-understanding, it can also uncover fears and reveal troubling ambiguities as well.

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51. See BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 42-43.

52. See *id.* at 23, 42-43; Osterman, *supra* note 4, at 138-39.

53. See BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 42-43.

54. See Osterman, *supra* note 4, at 138-39.

55. PARKER J. PALMER, *THE COURAGE TO TEACH: EXPLORING THE INNER LANDSCAPE OF A TEACHER'S LIFE 2* (1998).

56. *Id.*

## 2. Potential Pitfalls of Reflection

*Lack of Confidence.* Many teachers feel like imposters—that they are not as competent or intelligent as others believe them to be.<sup>57</sup> They live in fear that their ignorance and incompetence will be revealed to their colleagues and students.<sup>58</sup> These teachers react to student evaluations by minimizing the value of the positive evaluations and “ascribing great significance to negative” ones.<sup>59</sup> The reflective process has the potential to feed the imposter syndrome. As teachers critically examine their methods, they will identify some that do not achieve their aims. When teachers experiment with new ideas and practices, they leave their comfort zone and run the risk that the new ideas or techniques will not work well.<sup>60</sup> One way for teachers to deal with this lack of confidence is to recognize that many excellent teachers share this characteristic. A method to reduce the fear created by the imposter syndrome is for teachers to speak to trusted colleagues about their feelings.<sup>61</sup> By articulating their concerns, teachers can reduce their fear of being “found out” and can prompt colleagues to share illustrations of their experiences with the imposter syndrome.<sup>62</sup>

*Overwhelming Complexity.* Teachers’ stories of critical reflection often are characterized by a loss of innocence.<sup>63</sup> Reflection makes teachers aware of the inherent ambiguity of teaching, that many problems will not have simple solutions, and that the process of becoming a good teacher is continuous.<sup>64</sup> Teachers need to recognize that the loss of innocence is an important and predictable part of the reflective process. Developmental psychology literature demonstrates that the recognition of complexity and ambiguity is a necessary and central aspect of personal and professional growth.<sup>65</sup>

*Slow Pace of Change.* The process of becoming a reflective professional is slow and incremental.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, changes in teachers’ assumptions and behaviors are neither linear nor smooth. Instead, teachers describe this process as moving forward and retreating between existing and new ideas and practices.<sup>67</sup> Their enthusiasm for engaging in reflection waxes and wanes. It is

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57. See BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 229.

58. *Id.* at 229-30.

59. *Id.* at 231.

60. *Id.* at 232.

61. *Id.* at 233.

62. BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 234.

63. *Id.* at 239.

64. *See id.*

65. *See id.* at 240-41.

66. *See id.* at 241.

67. BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 242.

important for teachers to realize that these experiences and feelings are normal, not evidence that reflection does not work for them. Again, talking with colleagues, either at their own schools or other schools, can help teachers deal with the frustrations that can accompany the gradual and hesitant nature of change.<sup>68</sup> Journal writing is one way teachers can keep track of their progress and maintain interest in using reflection to change their assumptions and behavior.

## II. REFLECTIVE JOURNALS FOR TEACHERS

Keeping a professional journal is one of many means for facilitating reflection. Others include assembling a teaching portfolio,<sup>69</sup> holding critical conversations with a small group of teachers,<sup>70</sup> reading critical reflection literature,<sup>71</sup> viewing videotapes of classroom performance, exploring metaphors about teaching, and writing a statement of beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning.<sup>72</sup> This section of the Article addresses the advantages and difficulties of reflective journals for teachers. It distills ideas from three sources: articles in legal literature addressing the use of journals by students in law courses;<sup>73</sup> books and articles on teacher education concerning the use of

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68. See *id.* at 244-45.

69. See Susan R. Dailey, *Integrating Theory and Practice Through Teacher Portfolios*, 4 J. LEGAL WRITING INST. 149, 149-54 (1998). Teacher portfolios have been used for faculty development in higher education, including law schools. See *id.* at 149. A teacher portfolio is assembled by the teacher and may include syllabi, class notes, course material, student work, a statement of teaching philosophy, and student and peer evaluations of teaching. Portfolios can improve teacher performance because they help teachers reflect on their educational practices and plan for the future. See *id.* at 154.

70. See BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 140-59; PALMER, *supra* note 55, at 145-56. Both authors suggest ground rules for critical conversations and prompts to encourage reflection and discussion.

71. See BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 207-27 (providing references to books dealing with critical pedagogy, reflective practice, and adult education).

72. See Robert B. Kottkamp, *Means for Facilitating Reflection*, 22 EDUC. & URB. SOC'Y 182, 189-97 (1990).

73. See, e.g., James R. Elkins, *Writing Our Lives: Making Introspective Writing a Part of Legal Education*, 29 WILLAMETTE L. REV. 45 (1993) (discussing the use of journals in an Introduction to Law course); J.P. Ogilvy, *The Use of Journals in Legal Education: A Tool for Reflection*, 3 CLINICAL L. REV. 55 (1996) (addressing the use of journals in clinical courses, an externship program, an academic support program, simulation courses, and traditional law school courses); Mark Weisberg & Jacalyn Duffin, *Evoking the Moral Imagination*, CHANGE, Jan./Feb. 1995, at 21 (discussing the use of journals to teach ethics and professionalism to nursing, medical, and law students).

journals to improve teaching;<sup>74</sup> and my experience keeping a teaching journal.

### A. *Value of Reflective Journals*

The process of keeping a professional journal promotes reflective behavior and enhances the likelihood that the writer will become a reflective practitioner.<sup>75</sup> Teachers who “engage[] in journal writing over time . . . develop a habit of reflection.”<sup>76</sup> Keeping a journal can be self-sustaining—the more we write and reflect the more we want to write and reflect.<sup>77</sup> That has been my experience keeping a journal over the last three years. What began as an experiment has become an integral part of my personal and professional life.<sup>78</sup>

Teachers can use their journals for several beneficial purposes. Journals can serve as a device for recording ideas, planning instruction, engaging in critical reflection, and evaluating professional performance. Teachers can use journals to analyze problems and work through the strong emotions that accompany teaching. Journals can be a vehicle for teachers to integrate their personal and professional selves and to engage in a lifelong learning process.

*Recording events, emotions, and ideas.* One basic function of a teaching journal is that of a recording device. It provides a safe, private medium for the writer to memorialize events, feelings, and ideas.<sup>79</sup> Teachers can use journals as an idea-keeper, a place to record problems, successes, strategies for improvement, and reminders for teaching subsequent classes.<sup>80</sup> Teachers who keep a journal will have a comprehensive account of their experience at the end of a course. Because journal entries are made close in time to the teacher’s experiences, they are more likely to be accurate than the teacher’s impressions

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74. See, e.g., Amber Dahlin, *The Teacher as a Reflective Professional*, 42 COLLEGE TEACHING 57 (1994) (college teacher); David Gorman, *Self-Tuning Teachers: Using Reflective Journals in Writing Classes*, 41 J. ADOLESCENT & ADULT LITERACY 434 (1998) (high school teacher); Mitzi Lewison, *Why Do We Find Writing So Hard? Using Journals to Inquire into Our Teaching*, 52 READING TCHR. 522 (1999) (elementary school teachers).

75. Ogilvy, *supra* note 73, at 59 n.8, 63.

76. See Yost et al., *supra* note 16, at 45.

77. See Weisberg & Duffin, *supra* note 73, at 25.

78. After keeping my teaching journal for three months, I left it on an airplane. My brief comments about it illustrate how quickly the journal became part of my life:

*Amazing how important the journal has become. I hope very much to get it back.*

*And, I really felt the need to write in it today.*

I tried hard to get the airline personnel to look for my journal but they did not find it.

79. Stacy Caplow, *From Courtroom to Classroom: Creating an Academic Component to Enhance the Skills and Values Learned in a Student Judicial Clerkship Clinic*, 75 NEB. L. REV. 872, 897 (1996).

80. See Steven A. Meyers & Loreto R. Prieto, *Using Active Learning to Improve the Training of Psychology Teaching Assistants*, 27 TEACHING PSYCHOL. 283, 283 (2000).

months after the fact.<sup>81</sup> The comprehensive, accurate record of the teacher's experience forms the basis for the teacher's subsequent planning, analysis, reflection, evaluation, and growth.<sup>82</sup> In his instructions for keeping a teaching log, Brookfield summarizes the benefits of teachers recording their experiences:

Keeping a log of your private reactions to, and interpretations of, the events you think are important in your life as a teacher is one way of helping you realize several things about yourself. As you review your jottings on these events over a period of time, you'll learn that they constitute a record of your preoccupations, obsessions, and commonly experienced problems. Reading your log, you'll start to see patterns of inclusion and exclusion—things that keep cropping up and consuming your attention and emotional energy, and things that are conspicuous by their absence. You'll become more aware of some of your habitual practices, you'll get a more accurate reading of the dilemmas (ethical and methodological) you encounter on a regular basis, and you'll begin to notice typical triggers to your emotional peaks and to periods of self-doubt. Having this information is an important first step in your coming to a clear understanding of the assumptions you hold about teaching. Once you know what these are, you can start to examine where they've come from and how far they explain what happens in your practice.

The log will also help you develop insight into your own emotional and cognitive rhythms as a teacher. By this I mean that you'll become more aware of how you go about organizing your teaching, the kinds of teaching tasks you are drawn to or resist, the teaching styles you find most congenial and those you find most difficult, the conditions that encourage you to take risks, the warning signals that indicate you are about to hit an emotional low, and the factors that tend to keep you going through the "quitting times" of low morale, depression, and loss of confidence.<sup>83</sup>

*Planning Instruction.* My teaching journal is an important tool for me to engage in long-term as well as short-term planning. Many of my journal entries consist of goal-setting. At the beginning of a semester, I write about my hopes for my courses, myself, and my students.<sup>84</sup> As the semester progresses, my

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81. See Gorman, *supra* note 74, at 441-42; Caplow, *supra* note 79, at 897.

82. See BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 72-74.

83. *Id.* at 72-73.

84. I wrote about planning my Environmental Law course in July, 2000:

*Environmental Law is offering a challenge—to create a course that engages students and maximizes their learning without becoming the course from hell. The course needs to be reasonable for the students and for me. I believe one key to the course is the evaluation scheme. I continue to move away from comparative evaluation toward criteria-based evaluation. My current plan is to include a criteria-based system for part of the grade.... In addition, students will have choice in percentage and types of modes*

journal entries discuss personal and professional goals for the next week<sup>85</sup> and specific objectives for my upcoming classes.<sup>86</sup> Many other entries concern my thoughts about teaching methods. Some of those thoughts deal with potential methods to achieve my goals for the next week's classes.<sup>87</sup> Others entries express my evaluation about how particular methods worked in the previous weeks' classes.<sup>88</sup> My prospective and retrospective thoughts about methods not

*of evaluation—test, paper, activities. Students could choose to be evaluated on only two or the three. This means students may have different incentives during class, but this is probably always true. It also means that students can design the course to meet their needs and evaluation strengths.*

85. I wrote about my goals for the third week of class in the Fall 2000 semester:

*Civil Procedure. What am I trying to accomplish this week? Statutory analysis via a problem; context via A Civil Action; case analysis; and ethics via problems, cases, and stories. Keep plugging away at learning students' names. . . .*

*Environmental Law. Key goals this week include statutory analysis and content. I need to make lively the ton of law that appears this week.*

*Colleagues. I will be at school for nine days, I need to connect as much as possible.*

86. I wrote about the first day of class in Fall 2000 semester:

*Even after 14 years of teaching, I'm a bit nervous about my first classes. I think that a good way to deal with that is to be clear in my own mind about the goals of my first classes.*

*Environmental Law.*

- *Convey excitement about the course*
- *Have each student speak*
- *Have students engage in course design*
- *Convey respect for students*
- *Have students feel that this will be different from a first-year course.*

*Content does not matter. My speaking needs to be less than 50% of the time. I want to convey some basic information about the course, but that is less important than the goals above. I want to begin making a positive connection with each student.*

In the middle of the Fall 2001 semester, I wrote about the class following a practice exam:

*Civil Procedure—exam review tomorrow. I want to be open and clear. My goal is for students to be clear about the expectations for the midterm exam. A secondary goal is to teach the content covered in the practice exam. A third goal is to offer advice about how to outline and study for the course.*

87. In the middle of Spring 2001 semester I wrote about methods for the upcoming week in Civil Procedure:

*I need to pick up some energy for next week. Two classes on summary judgment, jury instructions, and verdicts. That's a fair amount of content. Can do some by demonstration, some by illustration (A Civil Action), some by cases, some by problems. I need to make some of the summary judgment material active learning and I want some variety. Call on individual students for portions of the Celotex case? Small group discussions for problems? ... Small group discussions on Celotex and A Civil Action? ... Begin with the big picture and goals on Monday? Hmm, an activity could be for students to create a circumstance that would allow for summary judgment.*

88. In the Fall 1999 semester, I evaluated several classes in Civil Procedure:

*Ended the last two weeks on good, active notes. The Judgment as a Matter of Law*

only assist me in planning individual classes but also help me restructure courses the next time I teach them. As part of my planning to teach a course, I read my journal entries from the previous times I have taught the course, which remind me of methods that worked well, or did not, and new ideas I had for the class.

*Analyzing Assumptions and Problems.* Journal writing enables teachers to clarify their beliefs, implicit assumptions, and theories about teaching and learning.<sup>89</sup> Examination of those assumptions and theories can help teachers become more open to refinement and growth.<sup>90</sup> A journal is a place for the writer to engage in active problem-solving by articulating the problem to be solved, "sorting through the often chaotic circumstances surrounding" the dilemma, identifying emotions involved in the problem, and brainstorming solutions.<sup>91</sup> Journal writing not only helps teachers reason through a dilemma but also builds their understanding of teaching and learning by facilitating reflection on the problem and its resolution.<sup>92</sup>

*Critical Reflection and Evaluation.* A teaching journal is a tool for promoting critical reflection and evaluation. The process of keeping a journal creates the space and time necessary for reflection.<sup>93</sup> It encourages the writer to record experiences that can be the source of future reflection and analysis.<sup>94</sup>

*problems in small groups were engaging. The Jeopardy! game for the appeal material was a huge success. The students were engaged, had fun, and learned plenty. I'm so glad that I fought the urge to lecture, which was tempting because it is so easy. Oral argument feedback was mixed. Several students told me how beneficial it was. But some judges reported ... a lack of preparation by the students. One good suggestion from ... the students was to include demonstration arguments in class.*

89. See Lewison, *supra* note 74, at 522.

90. See Dahlin, *supra* note 74, at 60.

91. See Ogilvy, *supra* note 73, at 73.

In Fall 2000 semester, I wrote about my concerns with the students' struggles in Civil Procedure:

*I have some worries about the complaint-drafting assignment. Students struggle with the uncertainty. It is a hard lesson about professional judgment and the application of rules in real life. The self-assessment activity should be some help. At the same time, we are starting joinder, which many students find quite difficult. I need to be sensitive to student struggles this week. Perhaps I should address this directly in class?*

In the same semester, I wrote about a dilemma in Environmental Law:

*I received the student responses to the National Environmental Policy Act problem. I think that many of them are not very good. The students' effort does not appear to be high. I will make comments on each and ask for revisions. This is an important test for me and the students. I need to send the message that quality matters. If I ask for revisions from every student, the sting should be pretty low.*

92. See GERMAINE L. TAGGART & ALFRED P. WILSON, PROMOTING REFLECTIVE THINKING IN TEACHERS 91 (1998).

93. See Ogilvy, *supra* note 73, at 76-77.

94. See *id.* at 77.

The journal can act as a master teacher, probing for strengths and weaknesses, suggesting areas to explore, and encouraging ongoing critical thought about teaching and learning.<sup>95</sup> The journal allows the writer to organize thoughts and reorient perspectives by reflecting on experiences that are often chaotic.<sup>96</sup> At the end of a course, the journal's comprehensive record of experiences during the semester enables the writer to review goals, evaluate the success of teaching methods, and assess personal and professional growth.<sup>97</sup>

*Personal and Professional Development.* Writing a journal has both personal and professional rewards. It provides a therapeutic outlet for frustrations and stress.<sup>98</sup> It helps the writer deal with pain, disappointment, confusion, fear, and failure.<sup>99</sup> It allows teachers to confront experiences they dread having.<sup>100</sup> Keeping a journal encourages the writer to integrate personal and professional selves.<sup>101</sup> Although I intended my teaching journal to focus on my professional life, it contains both personal and professional reflections. There is an intimate connection between my personal and professional lives. My assumptions, feelings, ideas, and actions in my personal life influence my teaching. My interactions with students, colleagues, family, and friends affect one another. Writing in my journal has helped me with my personal and professional relationships and performance.

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95. See Gorman, *supra* note 74, at 434, 442.

96. Fran Quigley, *Seizing the Disorienting Moment: Adult Learning Theory and the Teaching of Social Justice in Law School Clinics*, 2 CLINICAL L. REV. 37, 59 (1995).

97. At the end of the Fall 2000 semester, I evaluated Environmental Law. *Environmental Law went pretty well. I think students learned more than in past years due to the ten projects they completed during the semester. It caused ongoing student engagement, taught them lots of real-life application, and got them to evaluate each of the statutes we covered. ... I think that the absence of an exam did not have much effect on day-to-day engagement. Most days, students were prepared and willing to be active. The room set up (a square) worked very well. It changed the dynamic and increased discussion. In the future, perhaps I should require two conferences with me during the semester. The main purpose would be to connect with students.*

98. See Elkins, *supra* note 73, at 61-62; Ogilvy, *supra* note 73, at 82-83.

In Fall 2000 semester I wrote about a bad day in Environmental law:

*Last class, evaluating the Endangered Species Act, went poorly. Class began with work on an ESA problem and a few of the students did not even think about it. In response to a question, one said, "If we remain silent, you will tell us." That hurt and the refusal to engage by some students hurt as well. But, it was a few students and has not been an ongoing problem. ... I believe I need to get back into class, make it good and active, and put us back on track to finish out the year. ... Hold no resentment from the previous class. My resentment will not lead to learning for the students or positive experiences for me.*

99. See Elkins, *supra* note 73, at 62.

100. *Id.*

101. See *id.* at 54-58.

*Lifelong Learning.* Journal writing can profoundly enhance learning. By describing, analyzing, and evaluating experiences, journal writers are actively involved in their own education.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, journal writing takes advantage of the connection between writing and learning.<sup>103</sup> Keeping a journal encourages the writer to analyze experiences deeply and critically.<sup>104</sup> Further, journal writing facilitates the learner's process of making connections between existing knowledge and new experiences and ideas.<sup>105</sup> Writing a journal can be the centerpiece of a teacher's self-directed, lifelong learning process.

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Although I have experienced each of the benefits of journal writing described above, they do not capture fully the power of the journal process. The "whole" of keeping a journal is greater than the sum of its individual benefits. There is something almost magical about the journal writing process. I often start writing with nothing in particular in mind and two pages later I am having new ideas and insights. Nor do the paragraphs above express the joy I get from keeping a journal. It is a pleasure for me to open the journal and begin to write. When I write in my journal, tension slips away, my mind clears, and I am ready to learn.

### B. *Difficulties of Journal Writing*

Despite the value of journal writing for professional development, teachers may find the process difficult for a variety of reasons. Those who have no experience with journal writing may lack motivation to write because they have doubts about the benefits of keeping a professional journal.<sup>106</sup> Others may have to overcome negative experiences with journal writing in the past.<sup>107</sup> For those who have no experience with journals, my advice is to give it a try. When I started my teaching journal, I had no prior experience with journal writing and was skeptical about whether it was worth doing. For those with past negative journal writing experiences, begin the teaching journal by writing about the past negative experience and try to articulate what went wrong in order to avoid repeating that experience.<sup>108</sup>

The fact that journal writing has significant benefits for teachers does not mean that it is easy. It takes time to write and many teachers have too little

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102. See Caplow, *supra* note 79, at 895-96.

103. Ogilvy, *supra* note 73, at 64-65.

104. *Id.* at 64.

105. *Id.* at 65.

106. *Id.* at 64.

107. See *id.* at 87; Lewison, *supra* note 74, at 523-24.

108. See Ogilvy, *supra* note 73, at 90.

time already. My experience is that writing my teaching journal often saves me time because the planning and reflecting I do in the journal helps me avoid spinning my wheels later. For some, writing in a journal is a joy. But others find that the writing process is stressful and involves hard work. They may also feel guilty when they do not write as often as they think they should.<sup>109</sup>

Journal writers run the risk of being disappointed in the content of their writing. Journal entries can be uncritical first impressions, more like a shopping list than a deeply reflective essay.<sup>110</sup> It may be difficult for teachers to capture the complexity of their teaching experiences, so they feel that their descriptions are trite.<sup>111</sup> Journal writing can lead to self-discovery that may not be flattering to the writer—revealing a personal and professional life that lacks imagination or inspiration.<sup>112</sup> I have experienced each of these disappointments in my journal writing. However, I have come to view them as a necessary part of the process of growth.

There are also personal and cultural impediments to keeping a professional journal. Journal writing can conflict with the teacher's preferred learning style. Some people are more comfortable talking about their experiences than writing about them.<sup>113</sup> Finally, habits of introspection and journal writing are discouraged in the professional world of lawyers that emphasizes power, success, and action.<sup>114</sup> Like any other teaching and learning activity, journal writing is not for everyone.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WRITERS OF TEACHING JOURNALS

There is no formula for "success" in reflective writing. Journal writing is personal. The recommendations that follow are intended to help teachers find a process that makes keeping a teaching journal rewarding for them. The recommendations address the journal writing process and prompts for reflection.

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109. See Lewison, *supra* note 74, at 524.

110. See Caplow, *supra* note 79, at 898; Harriet N. Katz, *Personal Journals in Law School Externship Programs: Improving Pedagogy*, 1 T.M. COOLEY J. PRAC. & CLINICAL L. 7, 50 (1997).

111. See Lewison, *supra* note 74, at 524.

112. See Elkins, *supra* note 73, at 68.

113. See Ogilvy, *supra* note 73, at 88.

114. See Elkins, *supra* note 73, at 68.

### A. *The Process of Writing a Teaching Journal*

Teachers are most likely to engage in reflective writing if they find it to be enjoyable and rewarding. If teachers view journal writing as a chore, they are unlikely to sustain their interest over time. Few of us need more chores in our lives. Six elements of the journal writing process can contribute to the pleasure and value of keeping a teaching journal: space, time, format, commitment, confidentiality, and content.

*Space.* Find a place that is comfortable and free from distractions.<sup>115</sup> For some, being in the office with the door closed will work.<sup>116</sup> Others will be better off away from school, at home in a favorite chair, in a café, or in a park.<sup>117</sup> I commute by air to my school, so I write on the plane, a place where no one knows me and the phone cannot ring.

*Time.* Schedule time for journal writing.<sup>118</sup> The time need not be long, but it should be regularly scheduled; for example, once a week for an hour<sup>119</sup> or five to ten minutes at the end of each class.<sup>120</sup> I try to write twice each week, at the beginning and end of the week, for about twenty minutes each time.

*Format.*<sup>121</sup> Choose a type of journal that fits your style of working, relaxing, and thinking. If art work, graphics, or other visual representations help you reflect, choose an artist's sketchbook. If you write in odd moments—on the backs of napkins at the coffee shop or on yellow stickies—get a journal that accommodates inserts. A three-ring binder will allow you to include items that spur your reflection, such as a student's essay, a note from a colleague, a portion of an article, or a memo from the dean. Also, keeping an electronic journal on a computer may be most effective and efficient for some.

*Commitment.* Put your journal writing time on your calendar and treat it like any other professional commitment.<sup>122</sup> Take this commitment to yourself as seriously as you take your commitments to other important people in your life,<sup>123</sup> but do not let the schedule become an impediment. You may want to write outside of your regular journal time after an especially good or bad

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115. RACHEL C. LIVSEY & PARKER J. PALMER, *THE COURAGE TO TEACH: A GUIDE FOR REFLECTION AND RENEWAL* 5-6 (1999).

116. *Id.* at 6.

117. *Id.*

118. *Id.*

119. *See id.*

120. BARBARA GROSS DAVIS, *TOOLS FOR TEACHING* 366 (1993).

121. All of these "format" ideas came from comments Professor Barbara Glesner Fines made on an earlier draft of this Article.

122. LIVSEY & PALMER, *supra* note 115, at 6.

123. *Id.*

experience. If you miss a time that you planned to write, so what? Guilt should not get in the way of subsequent writing.

*Confidentiality.* Do not censor yourself. Your journal can be completely confidential. Do not worry if some of what you write seems bland and uninspired. Trust that the process of writing about your teaching is worthwhile. My most helpful insights are buried in pages of drivel.

*Content.* Two types of writing techniques provide most of the content of reflective journal entries. Some entries can be in the form of free-writing in which teachers describe and explore their experiences, emotions, and ideas. Many of my journal entries are free-writes in which I plan and evaluate my teaching.<sup>124</sup> Other entries can be responses to questions designed to promote deeper reflection about teaching. My responses to reflective questions often spur me to think more globally and critically about my experiences and ideas.<sup>125</sup> The next section of this Article contains numerous questions and prompts designed to facilitate free-writing and reflection about teaching.

### B. *Questions and Exercises for Teachers*

Questions and exercises can prompt teachers to begin and sustain reflective writing. They can provide structure and variety to the journal entries as well.<sup>126</sup>

124. Toward the end of the Fall 2000 semester, I evaluated an assignment in which students wrote reflection papers about an oral argument they performed, a field trip to a court, and the book *A Civil Action*:

*I'm reading reflection papers from Civil Procedure. I believe that all three assignments—field trip, oral argument, and A Civil Action—paid big dividends. They gave students context, reminded them about the human side of law, allowed experiential learners to excel, and helped students see a path and role for them after they complete law school. Many students questioned the assignments before they did them and valued the assignments after. It is a long slog for me to read and comment on these, but I believe it is time well spent even though I am tired of it right now.*

125. In response to a question about the role of fear in education I wrote:  
*Fear in the classroom. It is a central part of the dynamic. I fear that there will be a lack of respect or a lack of student effort (I dreamed about this recently). Students fear that they will fail, be humiliated, and that they made a poor choice by deciding to attend law school. So much of what I try to do in the classroom is to minimize fear while maintaining high expectations. This is a tough line to walk. Both attitudes and methods contribute to success or failure in walking it. I fear that many students do not expend the effort to perform at a high level. I fear that we are graduating many students who will not perform at a high level in their law practice as well. I fear that I have not done enough to show students what level of excellence is appropriate. Hmm, appropriate by whose definition? Who appointed me the keeper of the excellence standard?*

126. For example, Smyth's questions, included in Part I.B.2. of this article, can help teachers engage in different levels and stages of reflection:

"What do I do?"

"What does this mean?"

Reflective questions and exercises from three sources are excerpted below. The excerpts are a small sample of the prompts for reflection contained in these sources.<sup>127</sup>

*Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*<sup>128</sup> is a comprehensive resource for legal educators interested in reflective teaching. The book contains thoughtful discussions defining critical reflection, reviews the higher education literature about reflective teaching, and explores the advantages and pitfalls of reflective practice.<sup>129</sup> It includes practical instructions on keeping a teaching journal<sup>130</sup> and dozens of questions and exercises for reflective writing.

Some of the questions are designed to spur weekly free-writing.

- What was the moment (or moments) this week when I felt most connected, engaged, or affirmed as a teacher—the moment(s) I said to myself, “This is what being a teacher is really all about”?
- What was the moment (or moments) this week when I felt most disconnected, disengaged, or bored as a teacher—the moment(s) I said to myself, “I’m just going through the motions here”?
- What was the situation that caused me the greatest anxiety or distress—the kind of situation that I kept replaying in my mind as I was dropping off to sleep, or that caused me to say to myself, “I do not want to go through this again for a while”?
- What was the event that most took me by surprise—an event where I saw or did something that shook me up, caught me off guard, knocked me off my stride, gave me a jolt, or made me unexpectedly happy?
- Of everything I did this week in my teaching, what would I do differently if I had the chance to do it again?<sup>131</sup>

Other exercises get at more global ideas and attitudes about teaching and

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“How did I come to be like this?”

“How might I do things differently?”

*See supra* text accompanying note 18. Likewise, the questions contained in the discussion of Van Manen’s levels of reflection are good prompts. *See supra* text accompanying notes 14-17.

127. Another excellent resource for law teachers who want to engage in reflective practice is *REFLECTING ON OUR TEACHING* (Mark Weisberg ed., June 22-24, 2000). This monograph is the materials from the Institute for Law School Teaching conference in the summer of 2000. It contains nine exercises for reflection, a bibliography of resources for reflection, and eighteen interesting and provocative readings.

128. BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19.

129. *See id.* at 2-8, 22-27, 40-48, 207-45.

130. *Id.* at 72-75 (giving instructions on keeping a weekly teaching log), 55-56 (giving instructions for teachers to keep a learning log of their experiences at a professional conference).

131. *Id.* at 73-74 (bullets added).

learning.

- A Reflective Inventory contains simple questions designed to introduce teachers to reflective thought.

What am I proudest of in my work as a teacher?  
 What would I like my students to say about me when I'm out of the room?  
 What do I most need to learn about in my teaching?  
 What do I worry most about in my work as a teacher?  
 When do I know I've done good work?  
 What's the mistake I've made that I've learned the most from?<sup>132</sup>

- Teacher Learning Audits encourage teachers to see themselves as adult learners and assess what they have learned about teaching during the past year or term.

Please think back over the past term/year in your life as a teacher and complete the following sentences as honestly as you can.  
 Compared with this time last term/year, I now know that...  
 Compared with this time last term/year, I am now able to...  
 Compared with this time last term/year, I could now teach a colleague how to...  
 The most important thing I've learned about my students in the past term/year is...  
 The most important thing I've learned about my teaching in the past term/year is...  
 The most important thing I've learned about myself in the past term/year is...  
 The assumptions I had about teaching and learning that have been most confirmed for me in the past term/year are that...  
 The assumptions I had about teaching and learning that have been most challenged for me in the past term/year are that...<sup>133</sup>

- Role Model Profiles help teachers become aware of their assumptions by writing about colleagues they admire.

This exercise asks you to think about the colleagues with whom you work or have worked, or those you know who work in other institutions and settings. Please answer the following questions about these colleagues:

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132. *Id.* at 146 (numbering removed).

133. *Id.* at 75-76.

As you look back over your career, which colleagues ... best represent what a teacher should be?

What characteristics have you observed in these people that ... make them so admirable?

As you think about how these people work, which of their actions most encapsulates and typifies what it is that you find so admirable about them?

As you think about what these people do well, which of their abilities would you most like to be able to borrow and integrate into your own teaching?

As you read your responses to these questions, remember that those we regard as heroes and heroines are often people who embody talents and characteristics that we feel are glaringly absent from our own practice and being. Rightly or wrongly, we view as heroic those who can do easily the things with which we struggle the most.<sup>134</sup>

*Critical Self-Reflection and Self-Evaluation: Learning from Practice*<sup>135</sup> is a set of materials consisting of twenty pages of reflective questions and exercises. Some are adapted from the prompts in *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*.<sup>136</sup> Others focus directly on teaching and learning goals, climate, and philosophy.

#### EDUCATIONAL GOALS and STRATEGIES

1. What are the chief goals you have for your students? What content knowledge and process skills, including career and lifelong goals, need your students achieve?
2. In your experience, what teaching/learning strategies and experiences BEST help students achieve the above learning goals?
3. What goals do you have for your own development and improvement as a teacher?

#### CONSIDERING THE LEARNING CLIMATE

1. It's difficult for me to learn when...
2. My students seem to find it difficult to learn when...
3. Things that make it difficult for me to build a positive learning climate:
4. Things students might say about a class or teacher that would

134. *Id.* at 77-78.

135. Susan Wilcox, *Critical Self-Reflection and Self-Evaluation: Learning from Practice* (2001). This set of materials is unpublished. Copies are available from the author.

136. Compare BROOKFIELD, *supra* note 19, at 72-78, 146, with Wilcox, *supra* note 135.

make me worry about the learning climate in that course:

5. A personal story (arising from my experience as a teacher or student) about learning climate and the way it affects learning:

#### ARTICULATING AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

What beliefs do you have about [law] students as learners?

What do you believe is the overall or primary purpose of [legal] education?

What do you believe is the role of content or subject matter in [legal] education?

How do you believe [law] students learn best?

What do you believe is the primary role of the [law] teacher?<sup>137</sup>

*The Courage to Teach: A Guide for Reflection and Renewal*<sup>138</sup> is a concise guide based on Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach*.<sup>139</sup> It is intended to facilitate reflection by teachers working alone or with a group of other teachers.<sup>140</sup> Part One provides advice about preparing for the process of solitary or group reflection.<sup>141</sup> Part Two contains questions and activities relevant to each of the chapters in *The Courage to Teach*.<sup>142</sup> The guide is an excellent resource both for teachers who have read Palmer's book and for those who have not.

- "Think of a moment when you were teaching at your best. Then fill in the blank: 'When I am teaching at my best, I am like a \_\_\_\_\_.' ... [Explain] what [this metaphor] reveals about [your] gifts and limits as a teacher."<sup>143</sup>
- "What are some of your fears in the classroom? In relation to colleagues? In relation to your professional career? How have you dealt with them? What have you learned about yourself and about fear as a result?"<sup>144</sup>
- "What sorts of fear are healthy for our students? Are those same fears healthy for ourselves? If they are healthy, can they be used more fully in the educational process? Should we do so?"<sup>145</sup>

137. Wilcox, *supra* note 135.

138. LIVSEY, *supra* note 115.

139. PALMER, *supra* note 55.

140. LIVSEY, *supra* note 115, at 5-13.

141. *See id.* at 5-7.

142. *Id.* at 15-41.

143. *Id.* at 35.

144. *Id.* at 20.

145. LIVSEY, *supra* note 115, at 21.

- “Draw three columns. . . . In the first column, list some negative images of today’s students. In the second column, list some of the fears faced by young people in today’s society. In the third column, list the positive attributes that you’ve observed in today’s students. How do these lists relate? How might this profile inform your teaching?”<sup>146</sup>
- “Name some of your key gifts or strengths as a teacher. Now name a struggle or difficulty you commonly have in teaching. How do you understand the relation between your profile of giftedness and the kind of trouble you typically get into in the classroom?”<sup>147</sup>
- “Write a personal statement trying to express what is at the heart of your life as a teacher. Consider the following questions: Why did I become a teacher? What do I stand for as a teacher? . . . What do I want my legacy as a teacher to be?”<sup>148</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

I hope that this Article plays a role, however small, in motivating more law teachers to keep a teaching journal. I am confident that the teachers who do so will develop a habit that improves their personal and professional lives even if they read none of the resources cited in this Article and use none of the reflective questions and exercises set out above. Just the process of writing about what happened in class, or how they taught, or what they learned, or why they feel great or terrible about teaching will open them to the benefits of reflection.

Before my impulsive decision to begin keeping a teaching journal, I had not thought much about the benefits of reflective writing for teachers. My friends and colleagues probably did not think that I was a reflective writer. They were right. I wasn’t. But writing my teaching journal for the past three years has changed that. For my benefit and the benefit of my students as well.

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146. *Id.* at 22.

147. *Id.* at 25.

148. *Id.* at 16.