HOW DOCUMENTATION CAN AMPLIFY LEARNING

TEACHER AS RESEARCHER

Why Documentation?

When we document, we curate valuable information that will guide next steps in learning. Documentation allows us to share the holistic and complex story of learning; however, the ultimate purpose is to **AMPLIFY** the learning of both teachers and students. When students' words, thoughts, and questions are made visible, they feel heard, valued, and in charge of their own learning. When students are asked to discuss and reflect on documentation that has been collected, they have the opportunity to deepen their learning and the learning of others.

Learners see their growth over time when they have an opportunity to interact with and reflect on documentation on an ongoing basis. This builds self-confidence and inspires deeper learning.

"Documentation calls upon the teacher not to know with certainty, but instead to wonder."
~Wien, Guyevskey, and Berdoussis

Shifting From Product Display to Pedagogical Documentation

Pedagogical documentation helps us to value the process of learning over the products. When we display products of learning, we are making something that has been done or said visible to an audience; this often has little impact on learning. However, learning can be amplified when we ask our students to connect with, reflect on, and think deeply about documentation that captures their learning and the learning of others.

DOCUMENTATION

OF Learning

OBSERVABLE

What did we do?

What did we think?

What did we say?

FOR Learning

REFLECTIVE

Where do we go from here?

How can I connect and build on others' thinking?

AS Learning

METACOGNITIVE

How do I learn best?

How can I tell the story of my learning?

How can I examine my thinking to support future learning?

"The heart of documenting is capturing the learning and thinking while it is happening, not simply the act of capturing what is happening or has happened [...]. The reality is that many [learners] are not aware of their own thinking when learning [...]. This is why it is imperative for learners to have ample opportunities in exploring how to make their thinking and learning visible [...]. When thinking is visible, it becomes clear that learning is not about memorizing content, but exploring ideas."
~Tolisano and Hale

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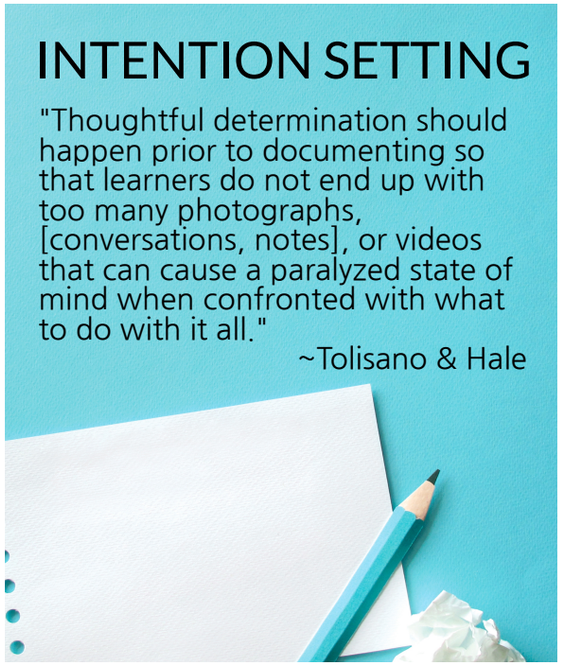
Pre-Documentation

1

To make certain the documentation you are collecting is worthwhile, ask yourself, does the documentation...

- tell a story about the learning?
- cause ownership of learning?
- make meaningful connections?
- encourage metacognition?
- move learning forward?
- give learners a voice?
- support growth?

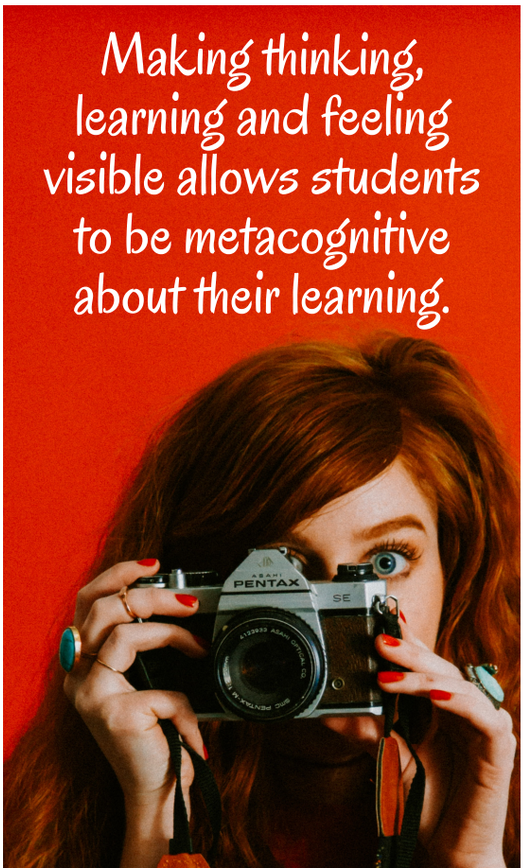


Think critically about what is going to be documented and why. Setting an intention and being purposeful about what you are looking for will inform what you choose to collect as evidence. Consider:

1. What type of evidence of learning, thinking, and/or feeling will you be looking for?
2. What type of documentation will capture these moments most effectively? (conversations, video, photo, making thinking visible strategies, other.)
3. How will you capture and organize your documentation? (pen and paper, google docs, phone/iPad...)

During Documentation 2

When you are documenting, and you recognize that you will be reflecting on and sharing this documentation with others, your perspective changes. Documentation is a learned skill that improves with practice as you begin to understand better what types of thinking and learning will be powerful to capture and share.



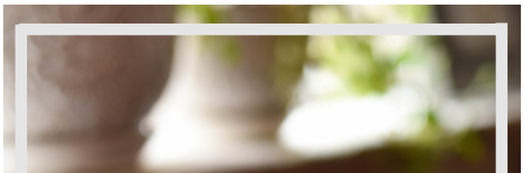
As you document, you should be continually asking yourself:

- what will help me tell the story of the thinking and learning that is happening right now?

- what type of documentation will best be able to tell this story?

- am I collecting evidence based on my learning intentions?

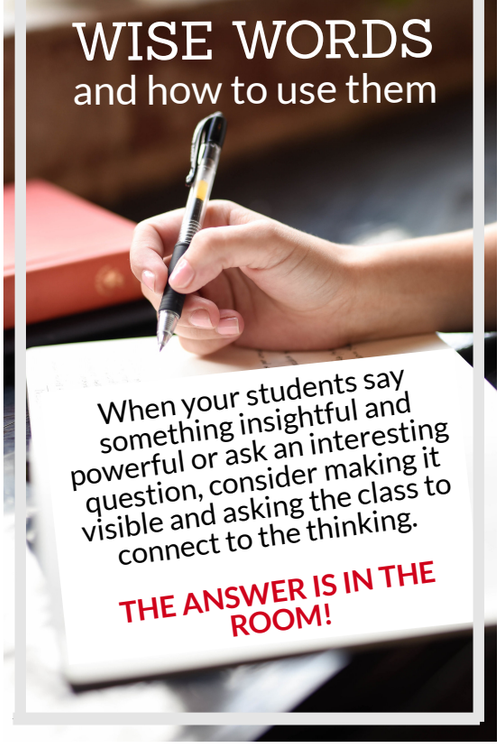
Look for Learning



"Telling will never be as effective as experiencing."
~George Couros

Capture Learning

How can I document over time to capture the complexity of learning?



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Post Documentation

What will you do with the documentation artifacts you have collected? How can you use them to inform your next steps and to amplify your own and your students' thinking and learning?

This step is an integral part of the learning process. It is not an 'add-on' or an 'I'll do this **IF** I have time.'

1 UNPACK

Look at all of the documentation that has been collected. Select the documentation that is connected to your intention(s).

2 REFLECT

Interpret the documentation. What learning occurred? Are there any big themes emerging? Any misconceptions or problems that need to be addressed? What connections are there between the intended learning and the learning that happened? Was there any unexpected learning?

3 FILTER & SELECT

Find powerful moments, key conversations, wise words, and/or conflicts that you can bring back to the students to nudge thinking forward, share a new perspective, or introduce an interesting question or problem.

4 DECIDE & CONNECT

Use documentation to determine next steps in learning.

5 AMPLIFY

Use the documentation to amplify your own learning and that of your students. The documentation can help to deepen the learning of the whole group, especially when collective knowledge building strategies are used.

Students reflect on their learning as they consider wise words, conversations, learning moments, etc. Students will feel valued and will also value the contributions of others' thinking.

Students will appreciate the diversity of perspectives and how it grows the collective knowledge of the group.

How will I use this documentation? Will I bring it back to my students? Will we create a visual to show how all of our learning is connected? Will we make this learning visible to others?

How does this documentation connect to individual and collective learning and thinking, to other areas of life, and to the world?

6 REPACK & SHARE

Learning is complex. How can you put the documentation artifacts together in a way that will best honour the story of learning over time?

How might you make the learning and thinking visible to others? Who do we want to share this learning story with: our classroom, our school, our community, our city, the world? How do we want to share? What platforms makes the most sense?

CULTURE

What we value is evident by what we choose to make visible in our classrooms, so it is important to select evidence that honours the depth of learning.

When we value learning over work, understanding over knowledge, deep learning over surface learning, student independence over dependence on the teacher, and growth mindset over fixed mindset, the culture will be obvious and tangible.

Engaging students means getting students excited about our content, our interests and our curriulum. Empowering students means giving students the knowledge and skills to pursue THEIR passions, their interests and their future.

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STUDENT AS DOCUMENTER

How can we involve our students in documenting their OWN learning?

To truly empower our learners to have ownership over their own learning, they will need to be able to reflect on where they are with their learning, set goals for the next steps in their learning, and capture and select evidence to show how they are meeting those goals. Many educators are creating learning maps based on the curricular competencies to foster growth and to put students at the center of their own learning.

Sample Learning Map

BIG IDEA: Why is affordable housing a problem in BC?	First →	Next →	Then →	How can I challenge myself? →
Building Empathy	I can understand that people have needs and that they can be different.	I can question and listen to help me understand others and explain their needs.	I can connect to the needs of others and describe the challenges that those needs create.	
My Evidence	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •
Reasoning With Evidence	I can use relevant information as evidence to support my thinking.	I can adjust my thinking as I find new evidence.	I can justify how the choices I made in my design were based on my family's needs.	
My Evidence	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •
Ideating and Prototyping	I can generate many ideas to solve a specific problem.	I can choose one idea and develop a prototype.	I can use feedback from testing and my peers to help me redesign and improve my prototype.	
My Evidence	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •	See my evidence in: •

HOW TO CREATE A LEARNING MAP

1. Determine the time frame for using your learning map. They can be created for a unit, a term, or a whole year.

2. Determine what big skills you want students to walk away with at the end of this time frame. You may consider curricular documents, your background knowledge, and the big ideas you want students to understand deeply. Use these as your main categories.

3. Think about how each skill develops. Ensure that your 'first' category is accessible to all students in your class, keeping in mind this may change year-to-year. The goal is to create a step-by-step journey for students to follow.

4. **Check your steps:**
   - Avoid creating a rubric. Rubrics are for products; learning maps are to guide the process of learning.
   - Avoid using judgment words/qualifying words like 'good' or 'strong' or 'clearly' or 'solid'. The level of how well they can meet each goal is evident in their evidence.
   - Check the verbs you have chosen to ensure students can actually collect evidence of that step.

5. **Remember:**
   - Learning maps are not meant to be an achievement scale. Students can be at different levels of achievement within each box of the learning map, and go through the mastery scale for each box as they progress with their learning.
   - Students should be given opportunities to interact with the learning map regularly to set goals, collect evidence of how they are meeting their goals, and check in with the teacher to see how they are doing with their goals.

To see samples of learning maps created by educators in the Central Okanagan School District, go to:

http://bit.ly/LearningMapsILT

This visual has been created by Marnie Birkeland and Lindsey Schroeder from the Central Okanagan School District's Instructional Leadership Team. Modified from the book A Guide to Documenting Learning: Making Thinking Visible, Meaningful, Shareable and Amplified by Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano & Janet A. Hale