COMPONENTS OF MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE

Consider the following components when creating documentation for exhibition or display.

Title A good title helps give the viewer an immediate sense for your piece. Try for something that gets at the meaning of the documentation. You might want to use a child's or adult's quote or a metaphor—anything that will pique viewer interest and convey what the learning is about. The title should be prominently placed and large enough to draw the viewer's attention to it.

Context Try to keep the context to no more than two short paragraphs of background information that will help set the stage for viewers. The context should include the teacher/documenter name(s), the age group of the learners, the names of the school and town, the purpose of the learning experience, and the date or time period. Photos or images of the learners are helpful to provide up front. Other information to include as relevant is the learning prompt or project, the size of the group, related previous experiences, or materials used. Photographs or other visual documentation can also provide some of this information.

Supporting Artifacts Carefully select from the various artifacts you collect (transcripts, photographs, student work, etc.) the documents that are most critical for helping viewers see how you came to your interpretations about learning (see below) or allow for other interpretations. The artifacts should represent the learning process as well as product—the *how* as well as the *what* of learning. If possible, choose at least two media, e.g., text (narrative and/or quotes) and images, to display.

Your Analysis or Interpretation Include your own learning in the documentation. What was exciting or surprising to you about the experience of the learners? What moved you or furthered your thinking? What connections can you make to broader issues or images of teaching and learning? Consider including brief reflections throughout the piece as well as at the beginning and end to communicate your interpretation of the documentation. What story of learning do you want to tell and what conversations would you like to provoke? You might also want to note how the documentation will help you shape future learning experiences.

Format Consider coming up with a uniform format for your documentation so that viewers won't have to figure out how to "read" it every time you post something new. In a school setting, consider providing criteria such as using technology that is accessible to everyone and easy to use. Format your documentation on a computer or by hand on small, standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11 or 14") rather than big posters. This allows it to be easily copied and distributed to colleagues for feedback, or brought back to the classroom and added to over the course of a project. If you choose to put up panels, their size will depend on the setting, but dimensions of 4' by 3' are often manageable. Try to present things in a way that allows the viewer to take in the key information in roughly five-ten minutes. For those viewers who want to explore the work more deeply, you can provide additional information or artifacts on the table or wall near the main piece.

Things to Watch Out For Beware of including too much written text…Try to balance learning about learning and learning content…It is sometimes more powerful to document the experience of one small group, moment, or event in the learning experience rather than an entire lesson or unit…Asking yourself, "What is the learning I want to make visible?" can help guide you if you are feeling adrift in a sea of data…