



**A shared vision for a high quality education
for every child, in every school, every day.**



ALAMEDA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
SHEILA JORDAN, SUPERINTENDENT
313 WEST WINTON AVE. • HAYWARD, CA 94544-1136
www.acoe.org

www.artiseducation.org

Making Learning Visible

Making Learning Visible is a way of presenting student work that makes the learning transparent not only to the student and teacher, but to parents and the community. It provides a vehicle for the viewer to learn more about what students are actually thinking, what and how they are learning. In addition, it enables teachers, parents and visitors to ask more in-depth questions about the student learning taking place.

The most common form of a Making Learning Visible is a visual display that takes the “bulletin board” in a new direction. Instead of functioning as a exhibit of finished student work, the focus is the *process* of learning and is often called a “Thinking Wall.” The display itself is a living document charting the teaching and learning journey through photographs, student quotes, teacher reflections, examples of student work and class hand-outs and other material.

Making Learning Visible is by no means limited to a visual display. It can take myriad forms including student-led tours and demonstrations, physical enactments of the learning process, websites, photo essays, and storybooks. In fact nearly every time we communicate about student learning, we have a unique opportunity to make student learning visible whether it is a classroom discussion, a conversation with a parent, a discussion in a faculty meeting, a school newsletter piece, or an introduction to a student performance for the school community.

By speaking about and documenting the learning process or Making Learning Visible, the meta-cognitive nature of teaching and learning can be fully explored. Making Learning Visible gives teachers and students a window into learning that captures the work and thinking that goes into creating final drafts, works of art and research projects. As such, it provides a vehicle for discussion that helps students build a meta-cognitive vocabulary and begin to understand their own learning processes. Simultaneously it helps teachers understand what is being learned students and chart the course for future teaching—for that very day and for the next time the same material is taught.

Often teachers use documentation panels to investigate a specific question they have about their student learning and their own teaching. These inquiry panels are helpful to teachers as they reflect on and assess their student learning and their own learning as teachers. They also provide physical evidence and experiential material to refer to as teachers discuss and plan with other teachers, their principal or arts learning coaches. In addition, it supports teacher conversations with parents by providing a road map of the learning journey their students are traversing. In fact, Making Learning Visible panels often go through multiple incarnations—each version adding layers that speak to the questions that were raised for students, teachers, parents and other viewers.

Making Learning Visible is a type of process documentation that emerged from the work in Reggio Emilia school district in Italy where documentation is considered the "second skin" of the schools. Harvard's Project Zero and the educators from Reggio have worked collaboratively to bring this important work to the U.S.



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**Examples of groups to
communicate student
learning to:**

Students:

During learning experiences, stop and reflect
After learning experiences, stop and reflect
After presenting their learning to others, reflect on
feedback and questions from audience

Parents

Performances/Concerts/Exhibits
Open House/Back to School Nights
Report Cards
Work that goes home
Letters – announcements, requirements,
permission slips
Phone calls
Newsletters

Teachers/Staff

Grade level field trips
Visit other classes
Assemblies
Faculty meetings
Daily bulletins
Events and invites
Website

Principal/Administrator/District

Meetings – faculty, school, district
Flyers and invites
Parent letters

School Board

Events
Email
Classroom visit/evaluation

Public/Media

Announcements and invites
Students sell tickets/marquees
Calls to media
Interviews by media
PTA events
School Events
Word Of Mouth



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Examples of Making Learning Visible to Community:

All Disciplines

1. Present "Students are the Teacher" demonstrations for open house night for students to teach their parents and siblings a arts technique through hands on experience.
2. Invite principal to observe class with an invitation that includes the learning goals for that day and an observation tool with suggestions with what to look for.
3. Create a "Reality Tour" where community members are guided through an in-school or after-school program by student guides meeting with the principal, coordinators, teachers, students and parents who answer questions and speak about the value of the arts to themselves, their peers and their school.
4. Create a process documentation display that uses photos and reflections by teachers and students to tell the story of their arts learning. Have student docents lead visitors through the display explaining the steps and answering questions.

Visual Arts

1. In a visual art exhibit, post artist statements with each artwork.
2. During a school wide exhibit, provide time during the school day for classes to visit other classrooms to see their artwork and read their artist statements.
3. Create a set of conversation prompts for parents and students as they explore an art exhibit together.

Music

1. For the school community to better understand the team-work required for choral music, engage audience at a music concert in a simple round song or two-part harmony. Have students demonstrate a four-part harmony song.
2. Have students create artist statements using prompts and then record themselves speaking their reflections. As a group, put the statement recording to music integrating the spoken piece with live music and then perform the piece for a concert.
3. Provide parents with a checklist for them to listen to and respond to during practice before the concert and at concert--e.g. Pleasant sound, at the appropriate volume and speed.

Theater

1. Include artist statements for students and teachers in the presentation program.
2. In school newsletter, feature a before and an after reflection by a student that participated in the play. Consider including one by an actor and one by a behind-the-curtain technical student.

Dance

1. Project artist statements by student dancers and choreographers on a screen during the break between dance numbers.
2. Have students briefly demonstrate the steps of the choreography process before performing a final piece.



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Major Components of Making Learning Visible Displays:

Big Picture and Big Questions:

What are we learning and why? What do we want to investigate about our learning?
Understanding goals, inquiry questions, teaching and learning dilemmas...

Chronological Description:

What did we do in the process of learning? What happened?
Student-generated, step-by-step tour of the learning process...

Documentation:

What did the learning process look like in the classroom?
Photographs of students engaged in the learning process...
Photographs of student work in progress and finished work...

Artifacts:

What is evidence of our learning?
Class Work: Group brainstorm sheets, interactive writing...
Student Work: Diagrams, sketches, outlines, worksheets...
Resource Material: Hand-outs, text-book pages, data, maps, newspaper articles...
Physical Materials: sample tools or ziplock bags of materials used or other physical evidence...

Student Reflection:

What have we learned and what do we think (and feel) about that?
Quotes describing what they felt at different points during the learning process, written reflections describing what they feel they have learned, journal entries, questions they generated while looking at documentation, transcriptions of quotes or conversations heard by teacher, peer interviews about the learning process...

Teacher Reflection:

What have we learned (as a teacher and as a class) and what do I think (and feel) about that?
Quotes or brief writing reflecting on what important learning steps were taken by your students, what challenges they overcame, what surprised you during the process...
Reflections about imbedded types of learning not readily visible or discussed in the panel such as thinking skills or emotional/physical/life skills...
Reflections about the big picture, the overall expedition, the progress on understanding goals...



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Making Learning Visible – Student Discussion Protocol

These are a lexicon of prompts for teachers to choose from to generate student discussion.

- Where did you begin? Tell us what you were doing.
- What did you think would happen? What happened? Why do you think it happened?
- What do/did you see? What do you wonder now?
- What did you learn from this? What was your favorite way of showing what you know?
- What was easy for you? What was difficult for you?
- What would you change about the way you did this, if you could?
- What else are you curious about? What if...? You changed, removed, added...
- Was there anything that surprised you about what happened? About what you learned?
- Is there something else in your life that this reminds you of?
- What did you find out about yourself and the way you learn?
- What things do you feel best about in this work? How could you make this better?
- Who did you work with? What did you learn from others in your group?
- Did you work well with others? How could you make your work with others go better?

Making Learning Visible -- Parent Discussion Protocol

The facilitator asks the parent viewers:

- “What do you notice? What drew your attention?” S/he may ask the question several times until there is nothing more to say really encouraging people to look more closely.
- “How does looking at and reading this display help you understand what your child is learning in this class (or about this subject?)”
- “What questions will you ask your child about this work?”
- “What questions do you have for the teacher as a result of seeing this display?”

Making Learning Visible – Visitor Discussion Protocol

The facilitator asks the visitors:

- “What do you notice? What drew your attention?” S/he may ask the question several times until there is nothing more to say really encouraging people to look more closely.
- “What do you think the child or teacher is learning or working on here?” and “What evidence led you to that conclusion?”
- “What information do you understand about the teaching/learning process as a result of looking at and reading this display?”
- “What do you think the students and teacher learns from creating this display and reflecting on their learning?”
- “What questions do you have as a result of looking at this display?”



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Teacher Professional Development Discussion Protocol

To facilitate discussion at a faculty meeting or professional development event bringing teachers together to discuss their learning and their student learning. Modeled after a protocol developed by Steve Seidel at Harvard Project Zero.

1. Getting Started

- The group chooses a facilitator who will make sure the group stays focused on the particular question being posed in each step and does not participate in the content of the discussion.
- The presenting teacher puts the selected work or piece of documentation where others can see it clearly, or provides copies of written work. S/he says nothing about the work, the context in which it was created, or the students until Step 5.
- The participants observe or read the work in silence, perhaps making brief notes about aspects of it that they particularly notice.

2. Describing the Work

- The facilitator asks the group, "What do you see?" S/he may ask the question several times until there is nothing more to say really encouraging people to look more closely.
- Group members provide answers without making judgments about the quality of the work, the teaching, or their personal preferences.
- If a judgment emerges, the facilitator asks for the evidence on which the judgment is based.

3. Asking Questions about the Documentation "Wondering"

- The facilitator asks the group, "What questions does this work raise for you?"
- Group members state any questions they have about the work, the students, the assignment, the lesson and the circumstances under which this teaching took place.
- The presenting teacher may choose to make notes about these questions, but s/he does not respond to the questions at this point nor is s/he obligated to respond to them later.

4. Speculating About Student or Teacher Learning

- The facilitator asks the group, "What do you think the child or teacher is learning or working on here?" and "What evidence led you to that conclusion?"
- Participants, based on their reading or observation of the documentation make suggestions about the problems or issues that the student might have been focused on and what evidence they are using to substantiate their theories.

5. Hearing from the Presenting Teacher

- The facilitator invites the presenting teacher to speak.
- S/he shares her perspective on the work describing what she sees in it, responding if s/he chooses to any of the questions raised, and adding any other information that s/he believes is important to share with the group.
- The presenting teacher also comments on anything surprising or unexpected that s/he heard in the earlier steps.

6. Discussing Implications for Teaching and Learning

The facilitator invites everyone to share any thoughts they have about their own teaching, children's learning, or ways to support these/this particular learners in future instruction.

7. Closing Reflection

The group reflects on the experience of or reactions to the discussion as a whole or to particular parts of it.



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Resources

Online Examples of Making Learning Visible

1. Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero Documentation

Link: <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/mlv/documentation/index.cfm>

2. Alameda County Office of Education's Making Learning Visible Booklet

Link: <http://www.artiseducation.org/artised/present.html>

Please note: click on the second link on the page and please know that depending on your internet connection this print quality document may take a minute or two to load up in your web browser.

3. Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education Documentation

Link: <http://www.capeweb.org/rexamples.html>

Please note: scroll down the page and choose "2006-07" from the School Year menu and then click on display units.

4. Reggio Emilia in Italy--Co-creator of Making Learning Visible with Harvard's Project Zero

Link: <http://zerosei.comune.re.it/inter/index.htm>

Resources for Making Learning Visible

1. Alameda County Office of Education's Making Learning Visible Toolkit

Link: <http://www.artiseducation.org/artised/present.html>

2. Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero Tools

Link: http://www.pz.harvard.edu/mlv/index.cfm?content_section=11§ion_page_level=1

3. Primary Source Learning Curriculum by the Library of Congress Online Curriculum often uses techniques that make student learning visible

Link: http://www.primarysourcelearning.org/teaching_materials/

Books on Making Learning Visible

1. Title: Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners

Author(s): Project Zero and Reggio Children

Link: http://www.pz.harvard.edu/ebookstore/detail.cfm?pub_id=107

2. Title: Making Teaching Visible: Documenting Individual and Group Learning as Professional Development

Author(s): Project Zero; Cambridgeport School; Cambridgeport Children's Center; Ezra H. Baker School; John Simpkins School

Link: http://www.pz.harvard.edu/ebookstore/detail.cfm?pub_id=133

3. Title: Making Teaching and Learning Visible: Course Portfolios and the Peer Review of Teaching

Authors: Daniel Bernstein, Amy Nelson Burnett, Amy Goodburn, Paul Savory

Link: <http://www.amazon.com/Making-Teaching-Learning-Visible-Portfolios/dp/1882982967>