

Tips for Good Documentation

1. Have a title visible for each documentation.
2. Date the documentation for posterity and indicate time length of showcased learning.
3. Numbering the items (either on the back or front) helps keeps them organized to share with other audiences at a later date.
4. Show the children's names or initials for their writing/drawing/comments.
5. Showing the process is important in every documentation. The trouble is that we don't know which incidents, situations or projects will be worthy of documenting until after they've happened. So we need to capture the learning with photos all the time; even if you don't have everything perfect. We can delete the photos we don't need but cannot add them once the event has passed.
6. Having an introduction to the documentation explaining the background to the project really helps observers to understand the value of the display. It helps position the moment in time.
7. Documentation is equally valuable for long term projects versus one day projects (teachable moment incidents.)
8. Photos should be a balance of close-up shots and action shots.
9. Black and white photos printed on regular paper are just as effective as color photos – and more inexpensive. There's a time when colour is integral to the documentation. You can display a mixture of black & white and colour for dramatic impact.
10. Mounting the photos on different colours of paper increases the impact. For example one project could all be mounted on one unifying colour background around each photo whereas another one might have the photo, children's writing/drawing and typed text all coordinating on unique colours so that it is different for each child. Different coloured paper for each photo adds an element of fun.
11. Children's voices should be shown on every documentation. It adds authenticity and stimulates reflection. It gives a snapshot into the thoughts at that moment.
12. Having multimedia adds dimension to documentation – capturing children's drawing, writing, and conversation; photos of the children in action; sequences of events; artifacts of created works.
13. Involving the children in deciding on the documentation deepens the learning for them and gives them ownership.
14. Decide which media will be the best to showcase the learning. Paper may not be the best way, and you may be looking at DVD's, audio, celebrations, performances as alternative ways for children to showcase their learning.
15. If possible, include children's reflections on learning or emotional responses to the project.
16. Include a pedagogical statement, that is, your professional voice. Tell the viewers about the value of this learning: curricular objectives? Theory testing and evidence? Collaborative learning? Making connections to previous learning or experiences? Creativity? Independence and confidence? Observation skills?