

## BULLETIN BOARDS THAT MAKE LEARNING VISIBLE

*Communicate and create values about teaching and learning  
Make individual thinking available to the group and support  
collective knowledge-building  
Help learners to make connections across units and subject  
matter; provide opportunities to connect learning experiences  
across classrooms or time*



*If you  
only have  
5 minutes,  
try...*

- Adding pictures if you typically put up only text, or text if you typically put up only pictures
- Adding your own reflection on learning to the board
- Adding a photograph or two of the learning process to the board
- Adding one layer at a time to a bulletin board such as student reflections, the learning context, a title, teacher reflections, part of the learning process, or an invitation for public commentary

Bulletin boards serve multiple purposes. They can convey a variety of information from meeting announcements and parent news to curriculum overviews and displays of student work. They can also make learning visible.

Why: Bulletin boards reflect a class or school's identity. In and outside the classroom, bulletin boards that make learning visible show what we value, offer opportunities for reflection, help learners make connections within and across subject matter, and contribute to a shared and public body of knowledge. Bulletin boards can also foster a sense of belonging to a learning community.

What: Bulletin boards that make learning visible focus on what was learned as well as what was done. They reveal the learning process as well as product, and balance content learning with learning about learning. They often include what the adult learned as well as the students. Here are some questions to guide you when deciding what to include on your bulletin board (see *Creating Bulletin Boards* worksheet):

- What is your goal in making the board and who is your audience?
- What kind of learning are you most excited about? What are your students excited about?
- What might you include that would promote additional learning?
- Is your commentary or interpretation supported by what you share on the board?

How: Bulletin boards span the range from simple to complex. If possible, try to find a colleague with whom to work. Make sure to put your name, the age or grade of the students, and date on the board (ideally in the same place on every board). Questions to ask yourself:

- Does the board include students' work, words, and photos?
- Does the board have a title (possibly phrased as a question or a quote from a child)?
- Does the board include a brief context?
- Have you highlighted or otherwise set apart the phrases you consider most important?

Who: Bulletin boards can have many audiences: students, teachers, parents, and the wider community. Consider involving students in what goes on the board:



- Ask students what part of their learning they most want to share with the school community and what they most want to know from viewers. (Specific questions elicit the most useful feedback.)
- Include students' reflections on their learning: what was hard, surprising, or exciting?
- Involve students in putting the board together and/or reflecting on it once it is done.

Where and When: Making learning visible in and outside the classroom are very different. Bulletin boards can be created during or after a learning experience. Creating a board outside the classroom requires sufficient context for viewers to make sense of the contents of the board. But it also enables a dialogue and comparison of ideas, beliefs, and values about learning and teaching that too infrequently takes place in schools.

### Variations and Extensions

Try...

- Revisiting the bulletin board with the learners...
- Creating a board about works-in-progress...
- Putting speech bubbles on a bulletin board...
- Involving students in making the board such as gathering information, taking pictures, and jotting down quotes (see above)...
- Taking a learning walk around the school with colleagues or students to see what learning is being made visible and what the walls communicate about the identity of the school...
- Pairing up with another classroom to read and respond to each other's bulletin boards...
- Posting an explanatory note to viewers that shares your "bulletin-board philosophy"...
- Asking students to give their parents a "bulletin board tour"...

### *Tips*

- Beware of including too much text.
- If you are feeling adrift in a sea of data, ask yourself "What is the learning I want to make visible?"
- Often it is more powerful to document the experience of one small group or learning moment than an entire lesson or unit.
- If you have time, "test" the board out on others to make sure it is readable.
- Think broadly: bulletin boards can be inside or outside the classroom, physical or virtual (i.e., blogs, wikis, and/or newsletters)