

Excerpt from a letter by kindergarten teacher Melissa Tonachel in response to a suggestion by a new principal to include an explanation of the assignment, the related learning expectations or standards, and the grading criteria or rubric when posting student work:

When I post student work, I am thinking...about how it will be viewed by...

- *My students:* Am I displaying it in such a way that they know there is importance and integrity in the work they do? Do they see connections between their own work and that of the other learners in their community—do they see how they have been inspired by one another? Am I displaying work in a way which encourages them to talk about it with their families?;
- *Families:* Do they understand something about the efforts and thinking behind the work? Have I drawn them in visually so that they are attracted and will take time to consider student work? Will they look at work other than their own child's?;
- *Colleagues:* Is this work compelling? Does it provoke them to think about the work their own students are doing?; and
- *Other students:* Can they appreciate the efforts of kindergartners? Does something these young children are doing connect to their own school experiences?

In short, I am always asking myself: Have I displayed this work in a way that makes the learning visible and understandable? And underlying that effort is this question: Is the aesthetic pleasing enough so that people will stop and look? (If not, why am I wasting my time?)

In working with young students, it is very often quite difficult (if not impossible) to tease out only a single or even a few learning expectations/standards by which to define an assignment—because if I am teaching well, students are encountering many different cognitive and expressive challenges at one time. A particular activity may call forth the language skills of one student, the artistic skills of another, the reasoning, sequencing, motor... I suspect this is true even in the older grades, even when subjects are more clearly delineated.

...Posting student work takes significant time and thought. We look at the work that's been produced and make careful decisions about what is important, appropriate, provocative, celebratory, or colorful to post on a classroom or outside wall. Each bulletin board might be considered a gallery space which brings viewers into the intimate life of a classroom and provides a view into the thinking that happens there. There is vulnerability in the very act—for us as teachers, and certainly for students. One idea I might suggest is that posted alongside each display of work is a blank sheet which invites viewers to respond to the work—to ask questions about process, goals, to appreciate. In fact, this would invite the students themselves back into the conversation about what they produce. We can bring those comments and questions back to the learners and ask them to reflect further on their learning, thinking, collaborating.