

TRAINING SESSION PLAN

DOCUMENTING LEARNING

Demonstrating and documenting learning is part of effective education. All learners need a sense of accomplishment. Staff need to know how things are working and whether kids are learning and growing. And the program, funders, parents, and school administrators want evidence that goals are being met.

MEETING GOAL: Staff understand afterschool-style methods to show learning and progress, and see how to use a portfolio process.

PREP: Copy handouts

MATERIALS:

- ☐ Flip chart paper or whiteboard
- ☐ Copies of Documenting and Assessing Learning, page 4, one per participant

STEP-BY-STEP

OPENER

10 MINUTES

Explain: Schools typically use tests to measure what children know in a particular subject. There are other ways to show learning, however, that better fit the hands-on, mixed subject, experiential learning of afterschool.

Activity

- Ask for two or three volunteers to teach the group something they can learn in a few minutes. It can be anything: a dance step, how to draw a cartoon, or how to count to five in another language.
- Have the teacher teach it to the group.
- Ask: How did the “teacher” know people were learning? How did participants know that they had learned?

INTRODUCTION

Explain: In afterschool, kids demonstrate their learning through performances, products, and demonstrations. They do whatever it is. How well they do it shows what was learned, and what still needs work.



DEMONSTRATING LEARNING, AFTERSCHOOL STYLE

25 MINUTES

Demonstrations should be aligned with objectives of the project or activity. If the objective of a project is that kids learn to represent the results of a survey, be sure the demonstration calls for that. If the objective of an activity is that children learn to create a web site, the demonstration is the web site itself.

If the project or work is complex or will be completed over an extended period of time, reward kids' efforts by taking performances or demonstrations seriously. Schedule time for presentations. Performances can involve invitees. Writings and art can be published in print or electronically. Use this as an opportunity to help children build confidence, and take pride in what they've done.

Chart and Discuss

- Create a chart with three columns.
- Ask the group to list in Column 1 different kinds of learning activities or projects children are doing. This could include homework time, special programs led by outside experts, long-term projects, or shorter-term activities.
- In Column 2, use two or three words to capture key objectives. In Column 3, note how staff know, or could know, whether children are learning.
- Distribute Documenting and Assessing Learning. Review each type of assessment. Ask: Do people have experience with any, as teacher or learner? Are staff already using some of these strategies?
- Look at the chart the group created. Which tools or techniques could be used for different activities? Add these to column 3.
- Go back to the handout. Working in pairs, fill in examples of where and how the strategy could be used. Draw examples from the chart and other ideas.
- Review the lists and examples again. In the full group, discuss where assessing and documenting can involve self-assessment or peer reviews. This builds critical thinking, and helps children take responsibility for their learning. It also helps them see their growth!

PORTFOLIOS

10 MINUTES

Explain: Documentation helps kids and staff both mark progress and share it with others. Portfolios are a system for collecting evidence of what kids did and learned. Good portfolios tie to particular goals and objectives the kids set themselves. At the beginning of the year, for example, you might set up a portfolio system with kids writing goals such as, "I want to do a lot of art and learn new techniques," or "I want to learn to make a web site." The portfolio then would be a collection of art work, work logs, presentation checklists, or products that show the learning.



Portfolios should be reviewed periodically in on-on-one sessions with each participant. Set review or conference dates that fit the goals and the age of the child. Younger children need quicker check-ins; older ones can have several check-in points months apart. Use the opportunity to build a supportive relationship that acknowledges success and growth, and inspires greater challenge and accomplishment.

The key to good portfolios is setting goals that are achievable in the time frame.

Activity

- Form pairs or small groups.
- Look at the work done so far relating activities and projects to different assessment techniques.
- Create three to five learning objectives or goal statements that could guide a portfolio.
- In the full group, share statements.
- Brainstorm the kinds of evidence or items that could go into the portfolio to demonstrate progress toward the goals.
- Ask: What evidence could go into a portfolio if a student produces a product that doesn't fit in a portfolio, like a sculpture, or a spoken presentation?

PLANNING FOR ACTION

10 MINUTES

Discuss whether portfolios would be useful in your program. What would be the goals of creating and keeping portfolios from the perspective of the program? Would it be to guide programming? To show parents? To show teachers? To celebrate kids' learning?

What do staff see as opportunities or challenges with portfolios? What supports are needed to make it work?

Identify next steps in setting up a portfolio system. Or, if you choose not to use portfolios, what kinds of demonstrations, performances, or tools fit with activities you're doing now? Pick one to try in the upcoming two weeks.



DOCUMENTING AND ASSESSING LEARNING

Documenting learning should be a learning experience in itself. Adults assess and document children's learning. Children and young people can use these tools and systems to self-assess, and also as part of peer reviews.

- ☐ **Checklist.** Create checklists to guide observation, or record steps or parts of a project or activity. A checklist for a cooking project might include "read and understand instructions," for example; "use measurement tools accurately;" or "work with others." Checklists help staff look at everything they should, and provide the same guidelines for each participant. Checklists can also be used for self-assessments and peer evaluations. Date checklists, and use them in portfolios to document skill development.

Examples of use:

- ☐ **Logs.** Use these to keep track of essentials, such as the number of hours spent on something, books read, or assignments completed. They can also be used to show progress, especially when coupled with targets.

Examples of use:

- ☐ **Presentations.** Presentations should be commensurate with the time and effort of the project or activity. They can range from visual displays, to presenting to a group and leading discussions, to performing skits, or showing research findings.

Examples of use:

- ☐ **Product.** Many projects or activities yield products: artwork, a video, a Web site, written work, food, comic strips, photo journals, a play. Products themselves demonstrate and document learning.

Examples of use:

- ☐ **Portfolios.** Portfolios are collections of material selected by the owner that show learning or skills. Portfolios involve setting clear goals, and periodic reviews of progress.

Examples of use:

