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# 1. Initiating Conversations About Learning

In this chapter, we describe ten ideas that show how students can initiate informal conversations about their own learning. These conversations:

- are planned at school by students with teacher support
- take place between a student and an audience outside of school
- take place anytime during the year
- communicate learning in concrete ways that go beyond numbers and marks
- invite an audience to respond to the learning

We offer specific steps that prepare students to take lead roles in the conferencing and reporting process. We provide samples of student reflection and audience response, as well as adaptations that have worked for us and for our colleagues.

## Work Samples

Students choose work samples to take home that show growth in their learning. They show and talk with an audience about the samples and ask for a response to their work.

1. Tell students they will need to keep samples of their work over the term, for example, when doing science labs, tests, writing, mapping or problem solving.

2. Have students select two work samples of similar tasks that show some improvement.

<p><b>Please notice my improvement in</b> <u>Silkscreening</u></p>
<p>In sample #1 (13 Oct.) I didn't know how to silkscreen. It was hard to cut it to get it to look right.</p> <p>In sample #2 (28 Oct.) The colours are clear and it didn't get all streaky.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Nick</p>
<p>Response</p> <p>I notice your improvement...</p> <p><i>in the colour and I really liked your costume design.</i></p> <p>Other comments:</p> <p><i>Keep up the good work! I know that you love doing this.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Love Mum (Dorothy C.)</i></p>

**Figure 1: Work samples**

3. Ask students to think of someone who might be interested in seeing and responding to their work. Give them self-assessment forms that highlight their improvement (see figure 1).

4. Ask students to take home these samples to an audience who completes the response section.

## ADAPTATIONS

When we know that parents are interested in seeing more of a specific skill, such as spelling or maths computation, we structure the work samples so that they can see improvements.

Students have the option of bringing these work samples and responses back to the school to include in their portfolios or of keeping them at home.

## Portfolio Afternoon

Students collect work samples over the term and organise them into a portfolio. They write personal comments about each piece, explaining why they've selected it and what they want others to notice. Teachers schedule a time for a portfolio afternoon. Students invite someone who is important to them to come and view their portfolios. Invited guests provide feedback to the learners.

1. At the beginning of the term, talk with students about keeping samples of their work so they can see and show others evidence of their learning.

2. During the term, have students keep a variety of work so they have a selection to choose from when they create their portfolios.

3. Have each student select pieces to put in his or her portfolio. It helps to give students a table of contents. They then select pieces that correspond to the items listed (see figure 2).

Subject	<u>Social Studies 10</u>
Name	<u>John Michael</u>
Table of Contents for	<u>my portfolio</u>
<b>Select samples that show</b>	<b>Your sample</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a strength	test on WW II (88%)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> improvement	using different types of sources (bibliography)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> successful collaboration	group map project
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> originality	poster - front page headline
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other <u>debate</u>	Andrea's comment sheet

**Figure 2: Portfolio table of contents**  
Reproducible in appendix, page 50

Two reasons I chose this piece...

- I now can write a bibliography correctly
- I used Encarta, a book, and the video on W.W II

Date 12<sup>th</sup> Jan. Signed John

**Figure 3:**  
Student comments

**Please notice:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Favourite	I selected this piece because it was really hard and I've never done this before.
<input type="checkbox"/> Improvement	
<input type="checkbox"/> Trash it!	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Challenge	
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	

Date 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. Signed Donnie

4. Have students record a comment on each piece they have selected by completing a form that tells what they want others to notice about their work (see figure 3).

5. Work together as a class to brainstorm guests they might like to invite as an audience to this portfolio afternoon (see figure 4).