



Presentations of Learning

Have students present their learning, grounded in artifacts/evidence from their own work, to a panel of peers and adults who can offer feedback and support for next steps.

Why do it?

Presentations of Learning (POLs) promote...

- **Student Ownership, Responsibility & Engagement.** POLs can serve as a powerful *rite of passage* at the end of a semester or academic year. By reflecting on their growth over time in relation to academic and character goals, grounded in evidence from their work, students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. Just as an artist wants their portfolio to represent their best work, POLs encourage students to care deeply about the work they will share.
- **Community Pride & Involvement.** When peers, teachers and community members come together to engage with student work and provide authentic feedback, they become invested in students' growth and serve as active contributors to the school community.
- **Equity.** POLs provide an opportunity for all students to celebrate, reflect, plot a course forward, and ask for the support they need. They ensure that all students are seen, and provide insight into what learning experiences students find most meaningful and relevant to their lives.

How to do it

Schedule a date and decide on a structure. Each student presents their learning to a panel of 2-5 teachers, peers and community members, and then answers questions from the panel or engages in a discussion. POLs typically last 15-30 minutes, and many schools set aside 1-3 days for POLs at the end of the semester or year.

Help your students prepare. POLs are a time for students to reflect on their academic learning and character development, and to celebrate successes and identify areas for continued growth.

- Help your students select work they are proud of and articulate how the work provides evidence of a learning goal or skill. Encourage them to identify artifacts that provide evidence of positive learning characteristics such as perseverance, organization, collaboration, or taking an intellectual risk. The following questions can be helpful prompts:
 - What is the most significant/meaningful work that I have done this semester & why?
 - How have I been successful in school?
 - What challenges have I faced...
 - How am I doing as an individual...
 - How am I doing as a member of this community...
- Watch video models of POLs together (see resources below) to identify good presentation skills.

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- Allow time for students to prepare their presentations and practice their POL with peers or other adults so they can get feedback before the main event.

Prepare the panel. Have a clear written description or rubric of what is expected of students of that age. Then review this with the panel members, advising them to look for both strengths and areas for growth, and to pose questions to the student that will help them articulate their learning.

Students present their learning. Have students present on their learning and growth, referring to particular work samples as evidence. Allow time to deliberate with the panel after the question/discussion portion to determine if the student has met the POL requirements.

Celebrate. Be sure to celebrate student strengths and progress at the end of the POL.

Tips & Tricks

Help students reflect on their learning and personalize their POL. Encourage students to personalize their presentation to highlight key learnings and experiences relevant to their goals, rather than walking panelists through specific content they have learned. It can be exhausting listening to the same 'facts' or assignments shared over and over again, and students will care more about their POL if they are able to choose what they share.

Avoid POL Fatigue. Schedule breaks, provide snacks, and be attentive to the energy level in the room. Before moving straight into questions, encourage panelists and audience members to engage in a quick pair-share with the person next to them, where they share a celebration and a question they would like to ask the student. Then open the floor to feedback and questions.

Have a plan in place for those who don't pass their POL. While it is always best to give students plenty of time to prepare and practice before their POL, not all students will pass the first time. Give the student kind, helpful and specific feedback so they understand what they need to do to meet the requirements, and then give them an opportunity to revise and present again. Being held to high expectations is a learning experience in itself.

Resources

- Envision schools have a final Portfolio Defense where seniors demonstrate their college readiness: <http://bit.ly/2n0Yn4M>
- At High Tech High schools students do POLs at the end of each year or semester to showcase their learning: <http://bit.ly/2nm4UKB>
- EL Education has a great chapter on passage presentations in their book, [Leaders of their Own Learning](#)

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