

# Preface

*When you need to innovate, you need collaboration.*

—Marissa Mayer

## A COLLABORATION INVITATION

Silvia and I met in person for the first time in 2010 at a Curriculum21 summer conference. I knew of her innovative documenting work due to following her on Twitter, reading her *Langwitches* blog posts, and interacting with her virtually in preparation for the conference. I had been inspired (and still am) by Silvia's forward-thinking around evidence of learning, and especially challenged by her stance on the act of documenting to go beyond merely displaying what had been learned at the end of a unit, lesson, or activity.

About two years later, I made an offer to Silvia, "If you ever want to write a how-to book based on your documenting learning concepts, I'd love to coauthor it with you!" I knew that her ideas needed to be articulated and shared via a professional book and I felt I could be of service, given my professional-writing experience with Corwin and ASCD. Silvia shared that she was not ready at the moment, given her life was busy with moving to Brazil, teaching, coaching, consulting, and blogging.

Fast forward to the fall of 2015. I received a phone call that began a virtual collaborative writing and image-creating journey that we would not trade for the world. You are about to embark on the result of our journey. Before you begin reading, we want to share a quick glimpse into our collaborative process.

Silvia created the majority of the visuals based on our frequent Skype and Facetime calls, Google Doc comments, and text messages. Our decision-making process involved agreement on the placement of images and the written text for each visual.

The majority of the QR codes in this book will take you to specific *Langwitches* blog posts for extended reading and viewing. Given Silvia has been working on the action-researched documenting learning framework we share in this book for over 10 years, there were plenty of posts for us to read through together to determine the one that best enhanced a particular key point.

When I asked Silvia what she felt I contributed to our book's collaboration, she shared insights that included:

There is no denying that I am a blogger at heart. I love the immediacy of being able to link, embed, publish, edit, and add to posts at any time. I love my forgiving blog audience with my tri-lingual spelling and grammar errors that naturally occur. With Janet's book-writing experience and meticulous attention to detail, I was reminded often throughout our drafting, revising, and editing process that her patience,

explanations, and editing of my German run-on sentences and Argentine culturally influenced metaphors helped to make us the perfect writing team for this project.

Just as the opening quote suggests, one learns and grows through collaboration with others. Growth for both of us as textual writers and visual communicators was invaluable. Our hope is that as you read through the chapters and begin to apply what you discover and realize about our documenting learning ideas, phases, and routine, you will find a colleague (or two) with whom to collaborate. Together, you can grow wiser as you begin or make advancements in your classroom and professional documenting learning journeys.

### ***A Guide to Documenting Learning Rationale***

We believe, and have found in practice, that the documenting learning framework—making thinking about learning processes *visible, meaningful, shareable, and amplified*—provides students and educators (*as active learners*) with an interconnected, metacognitive approach for creating evidence of their learning.

Our framework aids learners in owning their learning process, as well as assisting others in their learning growth. When deep learning experiences are visible and involve students directly in the documentation process, it enables them to identify moments worth remembering. When teachers are co-creators with their students, both gain valuable insights that inform future learning and empower students as engaged learners.

Educators will find the information shared in this book thought-provoking and invaluable for improving pedagogical and heutagogical practices, including those involved in

- personalized learning and ensuring student voice,
- contemporary learning and assessment alternatives,
- competency-based classrooms,
- technology integration that transforms teaching and learning,
- social-media engagement to foster learning and teaching,
- Reggio Emilia’s framework for pedagogical documentation, or
- becoming a National Board Certified teacher.

As the title indicates: This book is a *guide*: a *how-to* that provides insights into contemporary learning and teaching documentation practices in classroom and professional learning environments. There are other documenting learning books available that have a similar call for observing, recording, interpreting, and sharing to positively impact student engagement and learning. While we were inspired by Reggio Emilia’s early learning philosophy, and affirmed by the book *Visible Learners*, which shares practices for fostering K–12 learning through documentation, *A Guide to Documenting Learning* is unique because it

- Extends the use of documentation for all learners—pre-K through lifelong learners
- Uses the power of technology to amplify teaching and learning beyond the walls of classrooms and schools
- Expands students and teachers sharing beyond displaying and discussing their learning with peers at the same school
- Focuses on amplifying to reach from parents and a local community to a global community in dynamic ways

- Takes advantage of transformative teaching and learning opportunities through authentic uses of social media
- Encourages educators to document, reflect, and share their professional learning beyond same-site colleagues to inform immediate or future teaching and learning

### **Disclaimers**

While the documenting learning framework is not meant to be considered an add-on,

- we are not advocating you document everything every day, every lesson, or in every unit; and
- we acknowledge that documenting is a process. There is a learning curve involved, and putting it into practice will help you and your students improve its use and application.

Documenting learning is not the answer to all teaching and learning problems:

- We do not have every answer related to documenting learning figured out. We are continuing to search, research, pilot, revise, retry, share, and ask for feedback to become better at our documenting work.

### **Assumptions**

- We will rely on your imagination and inspiration to tweak the examples and vignettes sprinkled throughout the chapters for your own purposes and personalized situations.
- We will count on your willingness to push yourself outside of your comfort zone to observe, reflect, and share your work openly and transparently.
- We will trust in your readiness to be (or continue to be) a globally connected educator who disseminates his or her own learning to collaborate, communicate, and connect with learners outside your zip code.