

Documentation Examples > Examples of documentation shared back with learners**Making Every Voice Heard**

School: Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School

[project home](#)[see related projects](#)[back to documentation examples](#)**1. Initial Conversations, Student Reflection, and My Documentation**[» View larger version of photo](#)

"Our initial large group conversation about dignity was kind of flat. Then I asked my students to write for twenty minutes about what they thought dignity was, and how it was important in their lives. Later that night I read this wonderful stuff they had written--full of varied and rich ideas about dignity and its importance--and I thought, **"What a shame that I'm the only person who's really getting the benefit of this."** So, I had the idea of using [my students' writing as] documentation and reflecting their collective thinking back to the class.

I selected passages from each paper that either represented a viewpoint or brought up an idea that I found particularly provocative, and I arranged them under questions that came up for me as I was reading them. For example, "Does dignity come from within or without?" Then I gave these collected and anonymous quotations back to my students."

2. Student Responses to My Documentation[» View larger version of photo](#)**Does dignity come from within or without? In other words, is it something that is given to us or that we give ourselves?**

The following is a sample of students' responses:

"The one and most important thing [that gives me] self-worth is living every day and breathing every bit of air I can catch my breath with in order for me to be alive and experience the things that I've gone through and have learned from most of them."

"I think having a positive spirit and always having respect for you and others also helps maintain dignity."

"I think most dignity comes from inside yourself. If you have respect for yourself and carry yourself thusly and act like you care, then people will respect you."

"In my life what gives me a sense of dignity is knowing I'll always have my family behind me. Having my family is what keeps me going through bad times."

"I think that my success in school gives me dignity and self-worth. I really care about school and progressing in my learning. When I see good grades on my report card I feel like all my hard work has paid off. This gives me a feeling of self-worth and accomplishment."

Can dignity be taken away from us by someone else, or do we have to give it up to lose it?

The following are a sample of students' responses:

"The Hiroshima survivors have their own special kind of dignity in that they represent the horrors of the nuclear age. In

exchange, they have lost the simple dignity that is the birthright of a person. This is the dignity that allows you to go unnoticed."

"A place where people's dignity is being threatened in the larger world I think is Iraq. I think that because they have U.S. soldiers there running things as if they can't do anything themselves, and that is why I think Iraqis are reacting in violent ways, as I would."

"People that had to go in the concentration camps lost their dignity by getting put in a horrible place. They lost their voice to say and stand up for themselves."

"I realized that the slaves didn't have any dignity at all. Their freedom to me was their dignity. So when they didn't have their freedom they didn't have their dignity."

"... dignity is often sacrificed in order to be smart, safe, and stay alive if the conditions are extreme enough."

Does dignity come from what we think/believe or how we act?

The following are a sample of students' responses:

"I think dignity is believing in something you've been inspired by. When your dignity is being threatened you must protest or stand up for your rights."

"In the concentration camp article I see signs of dignity by them just being there, admitting they were Jews and still praying to god and continuing their religion even though it meant the death of most of them."

"To preserve my dignity when it is threatened by others, I think about all the things that make me a good person."

"Most people try to maintain their dignity by threatening the person-who-was-threatening-their-dignity's dignity. This just leads around in a circle of insult and/or abuse."

"I preserve dignity by walking away so I won't get rude or angry with others or myself... my dignity helps me stay out of trouble."

"Some characteristics that make up my dignity and pride is my understandings and knowledge, my morals and what I strongly believe in is what gives me my sense of pride and self-worth."

"... people take dignity when they are independent and are able to take care of themselves. When they lose this ability then they lose that dignity/pride in being self-sufficient."

"Where I see people fighting to maintain their dignity is sometimes in school because other people try to bring some people down, but people need to know that they need to block them haters out and just live their life the way they want to."

"In Hiroshima survivors, I see signs of dignity when the survivors remember it and celebrate its memorial as a holiday every year. And I see loss of dignity when the survivors try to forget everything that happened."

"In my own life what gives me a sense of dignity is being able to be my own person and being able to stick up for myself."

3. All These Movements and Final Papers



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"The discussion and written work that followed this use of documentation was much more sophisticated and complex than the discussion that had proceeded it. Later, in small groups, the students were able to relate these ideas about human dignity to the actions and behaviors of some of the characters they were studying in the novel, *The Lord of the Flies*. So **we had made these multiple moves--we started with the whole class discussion, then had individual thinking time, then there was some documentation of that thinking with teacher interpretation, then back to some reflection as a large group, then back to small groups--all these movements.**"

"The final papers for this project were the best that I had ever received from a class. Everyone had found a topic that they really cared about. They made deep and varied connections between their characters and either historical events or systems of government or social behavior or human psychology. For example, students saw the character of Piggy as representing everything from the social outcast to the super ego to Jews in Nazi Germany to the human intellect to J. Robert Oppenheimer in the Manhattan Project."



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"Better yet, they supported their claims with evidence from the text and with research and did just a beautiful job. So **I felt that I had found the right questions and that I had done this by listening to my students about what really mattered to them** about the novel and the characters. But **I had the sense that they would not have formed the concerns or interests--and ultimately the conceptions and understandings--that they had without listening to each other in the small groups and the large group. Finding out how other people viewed the characters in the novel helped to fill in missing information for them, but also it gave them perspectives and interpretations to try out and push against.**"