

Tips to support Learning from Practice

The approach to learning from practice featured in this module – learning from what is recorded in public space – relies on gathering photos of public space writing/presentations in a classroom. A challenge of this approach is that some photos work better than others for supporting reflection and interaction with colleagues. However, there are several easy-to-take steps, shared below, that will improve the photos for study and discussion.

Creating/Taking Good Shots

1. Test the location of the camera when picking a spot.

The items you photograph in the public recording space should be clear and easily legible. Make sure the space is properly lit and your distance from it allows words, diagrams, etc. to be clearly seen. Be aware that items that appear legible to your eyes may not be legible through the camera. Try viewing the image that appears in the camera display or a test shot to check the image quality.

2. Take one picture to capture the “big picture” and a series of close-ups.

Make sure to take one photo that shows the whole public recording space. If some of the items in this single photo are too small to read, then take additional close-up photos where the information is legible.

3. Keep it real.

It is important the photos document what was written in the public recording space during the lesson. Don't worry about rewriting things to make the space look neater or prettier for the photos. Try to capture what was actually written/drawn during the lesson – the goal is to learn from what you and your students did.

4. Prepare it for future reflection.

You might want to judiciously add a few lines and annotations to the board to help you remember – and others to understand – what is in the photo. Which things go together? What was the sequence in which things were written/added? Make sure it is clear which things were recorded in public space during the lesson and which you added later for the photo (perhaps use a different color).

5. Focus on the public recording space.

Since the focus of these photos is on “before” or “after” teaching, try to take photos of the public recording space when the room is empty and try to not include people in the shot.

6. Be mindful of color choices when writing.

If possible, write and draw in the public space using high-contrast colors that are easy to read in photos. When writing on a white surface, use dark colors whenever possible.

Technical Advice

1. Make sure there is plenty of storage space on your camera ahead of time.
2. The image quality will likely be better if you move closer to your subject rather than zoom in.
3. If it is important to capture fine details – small text, intricate drawings/constructions, etc. – consider adjusting the camera’s settings to take *higher* resolution images. If high resolution is not needed, lower resolution images will be easier to upload and share (due to smaller file sizes).
4. If your pictures are overly dark or bright in areas, try taking photos from different positions in the room to find the best angle. You may want to also try:
 - a. Being aware of light sources: Shooting into a light will tend to make your photos darker. If light sources are behind the camera, they will help to illuminate your subject
 - b. Adjusting the light sources in your room (e.g. using window shades, turning on overhead lights, turning off projector lights, etc.).
5. If your pictures are blurry, try:
 - a. Adjusting the focus (if you are able). NOTE: Most point-and-shoot cameras will auto-focus on a subject when the shutter button is pushed down *halfway*.
 - b. Adjusting the distance between the camera and the object/space you are photographing.
 - c. Zooming out – close ups can be difficult to shoot without good stabilization.
 - d. Stabilizing your arms/hands on a table or other stable surface when taking the photo.