

## An Introduction

As small schools continue to utilize performance assessment in the classroom and at the whole-school level, portfolios will be an important component to record, showcase, and evaluate learning in a way that reflects the multi-faceted work students are doing. Portfolios have been used in professional settings to present a tactile story of a person or product to an employer, client, or the public. But just as any professional could tell you, the art of compiling a portfolio takes time, practice, and a well-defined objective. The resources in this section serve to illuminate the uses of portfolios and the steps necessary for building a viable portfolio system.

Portfolios cannot stand alone. Without the proper support structure of daily classroom assessment, a portfolio becomes little more than a storage space for student work, destined to collect dust in a teacher's file cabinet or a student's closet when the project or class is finished. Alternately, portfolios that are aligned with daily assessment and have a performance component, such as a student-led conference or exhibition, provide reliable, legitimate documentation of student learning. Once a school has established that portfolios are **one** piece of the larger assessment process, identifying the purpose for individual portfolios becomes easier.

Deciding on the function of portfolios within a given project or class, or over the course of students' high school careers is critical to achieving meaningful outcomes. The purpose needs to be clear throughout the process to students, teachers, and any other pertinent audience. There are many things that need to be taken into consideration when choosing a portfolio purpose. Is the portfolio meant as a reflection tool or an evaluation tool? Does the portfolio document growth over the course of a project or showcase students' best work in a class? These questions and more are addressed in the Portfolios section as a means to push educators to make deliberate decisions about portfolio use at the onset of the move toward performance assessment.

Portfolios are a rich addition to a performance assessment system. Portfolios provide in-depth examinations of student work, supplements to standardized tests and report cards that are more reflective of students' abilities, and better ways to communicate student achievement to parents. However, there are a few things for which portfolios should not be used. First, portfolios are not meant to compare student work. Portfolios illustrate the hard work of individual students and are held to a standard set forth in rubrics designed by staff and/or students. There are plenty of other traditional assessment methods for comparing, ranking, and grouping students—portfolios are not designed to be one of them.







Secondly, high school portfolios are not yet palatable to the majority of college admissions offices, and schools should refrain from gearing their portfolio assessment work for this sole purpose. For example, if a student compiles a portfolio that showcases the strongest work of their high school career it would not be appropriate for them to send the entire portfolio to the college of their choice. It would, however, be appropriate to pull their finest essay from this showcase portfolio, as an essay is a required piece of many college applications. It would also be impressive if the student brought their portfolio to an interview and gave the interviewer the option of seeing more of their work. This warning is not meant to deter schools from creating portfolios for use beyond the classroom, but as a reminder to concentrate portfolio use on the proper audience and purpose.

Portfolios provide a rare opportunity for students to have a tangible, meaningful product that illustrates their abilities and growth, and allows them to articulate their achievements to the school and the community.

## **PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: PORTFOLIOS**

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### Portfolios for Assessment and Instruction

Judith A. Arter, Ph.D., Vicki Spandel, M.A., Ruth Culham (1995)  
<http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed388890.html>

This overview lays the foundation for designing a portfolio system in your small school. The work clearly outlines the uses for portfolios, types of portfolios, assessment issues, and viewpoints on portfolios.

Portfolios are scarcely a new concept, but renewed interest, fueled by the portfolio's perceived promise for both improving assessment and motivating and involving students in their own learning, has recently increased their visibility and use. The definition of a portfolio varies some, but there seems to be a general consensus that a portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of student achievement or growth. (Portfolios are not folders of all the work a student does.) Within this limited definition there are portfolio systems that: promote student self-assessment and control of learning; support student-led parent conferences; select students into special programs; certify student competence; grant alternative credit; demonstrate to employers certain skills and abilities; build student self-confidence; and evaluate curriculum and instruction.

Because there is no single correct way to "do" portfolios, and because they appear to be used for so many things, developing a portfolio system can spell confusion and stress, much coming from not realizing that portfolios are a means to an end and not an end in themselves. More specifically, confusion occurs to the extent there is lack of clarity on: (a) the purpose to be served by the portfolio, and (b) the specific skills to be developed or assessed by the portfolio.

It is important to keep in mind that there are really only two basic reasons for doing portfolios--assessment or instruction. Assessment uses relate to keeping track of what students know and can do. Instructional uses relate to promoting learning--students learn something from assembling the portfolio.

### INSTRUCTIONAL USES

The perceived benefit for instruction is that the process of assembling a portfolio can help develop student self-reflection, critical thinking, responsibility for learning, and content area skills and knowledge. (It is important to point out that most of the evidence to support these claims comes from logical argument and anecdotes. There exists very little "hard" evidence that demonstrates the impact of portfolios on students.)

These benefits aren't automatic; they have to be built into the portfolio system. Suppose you are a teacher of writing. You want students to improve their ability to write, and become skilled self-assessors to improve their writing. Using portfolios, what things would need to be in place? First,

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students need time and instruction in writing. But in addition, you and they need a clear and explicit vision of what it means to write well. How can students become skilled self-assessors if they don't know the target at which they are aiming?

This vision is often expressed using criteria that define writing performance across a range of proficiency levels. Clear criteria might specify, for instance, that a strong piece of writing would have elaborated ideas, rich with vivid details; or an introduction that draws the reader in while setting up what is to follow; or engaging, expressive voice. These criteria, which describe what it means to write well, not only serve as a guide to revision, but they provide students with a vocabulary for thinking, talking and writing about writing. Students who internalized these criteria could use them to revise their work, reflect on it, and set goals. The student could then use a portfolio to create a collection of best writing, or diverse writing (poetry, exposition, persuasive essays, journalism, stories), or a process portfolio showing how one piece evolved from brainstorming through publication, or a growth portfolio showing how her revision skills had improved.

Ironically, the instructional benefits of portfolios are not dependent on the portfolios. Close examination of work, comparison over time, identification of strengths and weaknesses through good criteria that define quality, goal setting, connecting personal best or favorite work with who students are becoming as learners: all can occur when the vision for success is clearly defined. What is really important is not the portfolio itself so much as what students learn by creating. Students can review and reflect on their work regularly whether or not they make a portfolio. The portfolio is a means to the end, not the end itself.

A classic example of an instructional portfolio system is the Arts PROPEL secondary creative writing, visual arts and music portfolios in Pittsburgh Public Schools. The goals are to increase achievement levels and have students take control of their own learning through systematic reflection on work and goal setting. (See Yancey, 1992; Camp, 1992; and ASCD, 1992, for additional discussion of instructional uses.)

### ASSESSMENT USES

The perceived benefits for assessment are that the collection of multiple samples of student work over time enables us to (a) get a broader, more in-depth look at what students know and can do; (b) base assessment on more "authentic" work; (c) have a supplement or alternative to report cards and standardized tests; and (d) have a better way to communicate student progress to parents. Large-scale assessment (assessment outside of and across classrooms) tends to focus on reasons (a) and (b). Teachers tend to like portfolios for reasons (c) and (d). We will look at three common assessment uses of portfolios and then discuss some assessment issues.

### **Certification of Competence**

A "passportfolio" shows readiness to move on to a new level of work or employment. For example, the Science Portfolio is an optional part of the Golden State Examination (California State Department of Education, 1994), a large-scale assessment for high school students. It is produced during a year of science and contains a "problem solving investigation," a "creative expression" (presenting a scientific idea in a unique and original manner), a "growth through writing" that demonstrates progress in understanding a scientific concept over time, and self-reflection that enlarges on the entries. Performance criteria have been developed to judge each type of entry.

A higher stakes large-scale example is associated with "Certificate of Mastery" efforts in several states. Plans in Oregon call for portfolios to illustrate student progress toward (in the lower grades) or mastery of (by about grade 10) the state's eleven major goals for students.

### **Tracking Growth Over Time**

A growth portfolio is a chronological collection that shows how skills, attitudes, etc. have changed over time. Early works are contrasted with later pieces. A large-scale example comes from Juneau, Alaska--The Integrated Language Arts Portfolio used in the primary grades. The portfolio is designed to replace report cards and standardized tests as ways to demonstrate growth and achievement. Growth is tracked using "developmental continuums," which describe stages of development for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Student status on the continuum is marked at several designated times during the school year. Teacher judgments of developmental stage are backed up with samples of student work.

### **Accountability**

Accountability uses relate to demonstrating to the community the impact of the education. A large-scale example is Vermont's grade 4 and 8 math portfolios. Students place 5 to 7 items in their portfolio to demonstrate their competence as problem solvers. The work is assessed using performance criteria for problem solving and math communication. An example at the classroom level is student-led parent conferences in which students prepare portfolios in order to demonstrate to parents what they have learned. (See Little & Allen, 1988, for an example.)

## **ASSESSMENT ISSUES**

Assessment uses of portfolios, especially large-scale, high-stakes uses (for example, high school graduation), are not without controversy. Some of these issues are: (1) What is the extent to which we need to "standardize" the portfolio process, content, and performance criteria so that results are comparable?; (2) Is it feasible to accurately and consistently assess student skills through portfolios? Won't this be costly? (Rand Corporation's 1992 study of the Vermont portfolio system provides an intriguing analysis of this issue.); (3) How do we get teacher buy-in? After all, teachers will be responsible for making sure that portfolios get assembled properly; and (4)



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Will the conclusions we draw about students from their portfolios be valid? The work may not really be the students' best, or may be someone else's entirely. There are, as yet, no definitive answers to these questions, although many fear that high-stakes uses of portfolios will destroy their instructional usefulness.

### CONSENSUAL POINTS OF VIEW

There appear to be several points on which most people agree:

Portfolios are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. The user must have a clear vision of what the "end" is.

Purpose will influence all other design and use decisions. Consider the two major purposes examined above.

Portfolio systems that have assessment as the primary purpose tend to:

- be more structured (there is more uniformity as to the items that are placed in the portfolio and the times at which they are entered);
- develop performance criteria primarily to allow "raters" to judge student status and monitor student growth;
- result in portfolios that belong to the institution;
- use self-reflection to gain insight about student achievement and progress;
- and require more time and skills for teachers to manage.

Portfolios that are used for instruction tend to:

- belong more to the student;
- be less structured;
- develop performance criteria for use by students for self-reflection;
- treat student self-reflection as essential for learning;
- and require more time and skills for students to manage.

Once the purpose is clear, questions about what goes in, who decides, use of criteria, and how self-reflection is used are much easier and more logical.

There must be a clear vision of achievement targets for students. Ask this important question: What is my vision of success for my students? If you can answer this question very clearly you will find the process of creating portfolios much easier.

There must be student involvement in the portfolio process. Student involvement includes selecting portfolio content, developing criteria for success, and self-reflection. Even those portfolios closest to the "assessment" end of the continuum recognize the benefit from involving students in the process. If teachers put portfolios together for students, not only is this a tremendous burden for them, students learn nothing from the process. Some authors even take the position that if any other use takes precedence over instruction, portfolios will fall victim to the same issues as past large-scale assessment attempts.



Clear and complete performance criteria are essential. For assessment purposes, we use criteria to generate scores or grades for students. However, the major value of criteria is that they assist us to articulate a clear vision of our goals for students and a vocabulary for communicating with students about these targets. Students could be partners in their development.

### CONCLUSION

Strong portfolio systems are characterized by a clear vision of the student skills to be addressed, student involvement in selecting what goes into the portfolio, use of criteria to define quality performance and provide a basis for communication, and self-reflection through which students share what they think and feel about their work, their learning environment and themselves.

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"A paradigm more closely attuned to the reality of teaching and learning is to insist that everyone's standards be high (even if not uniform) and that the evidence for achievement of those standards be public."

—George Sheridan

**Portfolios: Assessment in Language Arts**

Roger Farr

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication,

Digest #66

Roger Farr makes a strong case for the use of portfolios in performance assessment in this compelling article.

Portfolios are used in various professions to gather typical or exemplary samples of performance. Stockbrokers talk about a client's portfolio; art students assemble a portfolio for an art class or a job interview; people in advertising, publishing, or sales carry portfolios to business meetings. The general purpose is to collect and display an array of materials that has been gathered or produced (Farr, 1990; Olson, 1991).

The portfolios, if defined as collections of work stored in folders over a period of time, will have little value either to students or teachers. To be of use, careful consideration needs to be given to what goes into a portfolio, the process of selection, and how the information is to be used (Krest, 1990; Valencia, 1990). If this is not done, then the portfolio may become little more than a resource file.

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**PORTFOLIOS SERVE MULTIPLE PURPOSES**  
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Many approaches have been suggested for developing language arts portfolios. The one common element in all of the approaches is that portfolios are places to collect samples of a student's work. Whether these samples include typical or best work, whether they include reading and writing, and whether traditional assessments are added to the portfolios are all issues that need to be carefully considered. Other concerns have to do with the assessment of the materials that are collected, the ownership of the portfolios, and whether portfolios are used for both product and product assessment (Farr, 1990; Johns, 1990; Olson, 1991).

To serve the function of assessment, the language arts portfolio should be a record of a student's literacy development--a kind of window on the skills and strategies the student uses in reading and writing. A student's portfolio should be the basis for the teacher's constructive feedback. When portfolios are developed over an extended time period as an integral part of classroom instruction, they become valuable assets for planning both within the classroom and on a school-wide basis. When information is gathered consistently, the teacher is able to construct an organized, ongoing, and descriptive picture of the learning that is taking place. The portfolio draws on the everyday experiences of the students and reflects the reading and writing that a student has done in a variety of literacy contexts (Valencia, et al, 1990).

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The best guides for selecting work to include in a language arts portfolio are these: What does this literacy activity tell me about this student as a reader and a writer? Will this information add to what is already known? How does this information demonstrate change?

Portfolio collections can form the foundation for teacher-student conferences, a vital component of portfolio assessment. A conference is an interaction between the teacher and the student, and it is through conferences that the students gain insights into how they operate as readers and writers. Conferences support learners in taking risks with, and responsibility for, their learning. Through conferencing, students are encouraged to share what they know and understand about the processes of reading and writing. It is also a time for them to reflect on their participation in literacy tasks. Portfolio assessment is an appropriate means of recognizing the connection between reading and writing.

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### PORTFOLIOS ADDRESS LANGUAGE ARTS GOALS

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The use of portfolios for assessment is not a new concept. However, the idea has gained momentum as curriculum experts have called for assessments that include a variety of work samples and have asked that teachers confer with each student about his/her literacy development.

In the last few years, both the goals and instructional approaches to language arts have changed. New curriculum designs advocate instructional approaches that place an emphasis on:

- an integration of all aspects of language arts including reading, writing, listening, and speaking;
- a focus on the processes of constructing meaning;
- the use of literature that inspires and motivates readers;
- an emphasis on problem solving and higher-order thinking skills; and
- the use of collaboration and group work as an essential component of learning.

For example, integrated language arts instruction is now the accepted model in many schools in the country (Cal. Dept. of Education, 1987). Integrated language arts instruction for most of these schools means that there are no longer separate reading and language arts instructional periods--and often that language skills are also taught when students are learning science and social studies.

Integration also means that reading and writing are not broken into separate objectives to be taught, practiced, and mastered one at a time. Rather, it means that skills are taught as they are needed as part of a total behavior. Discussion preceding the reading of a selection helps to bring a reader's knowledge to bear on what he/she is about to read. At the same time the verbal exchange of ideas fosters speaking and listening skills. Despite the discussions of the importance of integrating all aspects of language arts

instruction, it is the teaching of reading and writing that has produced the most obvious integration. Thus, a portfolio containing integrated reading and writing work samples provides a valuable assessment tool.

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PORTFOLIOS AS AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENTS  
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One of the key issues in the development of portfolios concerns the kinds of structured assessment activities that should be included in them. Many curriculum and assessment specialists have been calling for the development of performance or authentic assessments (Stiggins, 1987; Wiggins, 1989). Performance assessments have been developed and used in the business world and in various professions for some time. Performance assessment is nothing more than the development of an activity that actually represents the task to be performed on the job--or the total behavior that is the goal of instruction. Language arts portfolio assessments should:

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HAVE VALUE TO BOTH TEACHERS AND STUDENTS BEYOND THE  
ASSESSMENT INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE TEST.  
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The tests should be so much like good instruction that a teacher would want to administer the test for its instructional value even if there was no assessment information provided. Value beyond assessment means tests will take no instructional time since the test is good instruction.

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REQUIRE STUDENTS TO CONSTRUCT RESPONSES RATHER THAN  
MERELY RECOGNIZING CORRECT ANSWERS.  
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Perhaps the greatest concern with multiple-choice tests is that students are not required to develop responses. Rather, they merely have to select an answer choice from several that have already been constructed for them. Educators have long recognized that it is a far different matter to write a complete sentence with correct punctuation than it is to answer a question that asks which of four punctuation marks should be placed at the end of a sentence.

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REQUIRE STUDENTS TO APPLY THEIR KNOWLEDGE.  
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Many tests provide students with a structure for the expected answers. Performance assessment is open-ended and allows students to apply their knowledge. Student responses to performance assessment should reveal ability to understand a problem and apply his/her knowledge and skills. This means, of course, that a variety of responses will be acceptable.

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### POSE PROBLEMS FOR STUDENTS FOR WHICH THEY HAVE TO USE MULTIPLE RESOURCES.

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The solution to real problems necessitates the use of multiple resources. The writing of a report, for example, is based on the use of various source materials, reference aids, and the writer's background knowledge. Assessments which attempt to replicate those situations will provide information about students' abilities to use multiple sources. Such assessments should also determine if students are able to select pertinent information from the available resources and put the selected information together in a way that solves the problem posed by the assessment.

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### PRESENT STUDENTS WITH TASKS THAT HAVE A REALISTIC FOCUS.

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Tests should look like the tasks that students have to perform in every-day life and should focus on developing responses to realistic situations. Tests often ask only for right answers. Even when tests ask for written responses, the questions posed are "teacher-type questions" that have as their goal an assessment as to whether students have a basic understanding of a story (e.g., main events, compare and contrast). A question with a more realistic focus might ask students to write a letter to a story character suggesting how that character might deal with a problem. This presents a realistic focus to which a student can respond, and the responses will reveal how the student has understood the materials on which the response is based.

Taken together, the general attributes of performance assessment and the specific goals of portfolios represent an integrated approach for language arts assessment. Since the contents of the portfolio are generated by the student, may be typical or exemplary examples, and require continuous evaluation of reading and writing, students are actively engaged in their own growth and development as language users.

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"There can be no knowledge without emotion. We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours. To the cognition of the brain must be added the experience of the soul."

—Arnold Bennet

**Authentic Assessment Toolbox: Portfolios**

Jon Mueller

<http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/index.htm>

For those teachers who are ready to try out a portfolio assessment, this resource outlines the types of portfolios, the purposes, considerations, contents and requirements for each, and the necessity of student reflection in the portfolio process.

Why might you use a portfolio assignment? Portfolios typically are created for one of the following three purposes: **to show growth, to showcase current abilities, and to evaluate cumulative achievement**. Some examples of such purposes include:

**1. Growth Portfolios**

- a. to show growth or change over time
- b. to help develop process skills such as self-evaluation and goal-setting
- c. to identify strengths and weaknesses
- d. to track the development of one more products/performances

**2. Showcase Portfolios**

- a. to showcase end-of-year/semester accomplishments
- b. to prepare a sample of best work for employment or college admission
- c. to showcase student perceptions of favorite, best or most important work
- d. to communicate a student's current aptitudes to future teachers

**3. Evaluation Portfolios**

- a. to document achievement for grading purposes
- b. to document progress towards standards
- c. to place students appropriately

The growth portfolio emphasizes the *process* of learning whereas the showcase portfolio emphasizes the *products* of learning. Of course, a portfolio may tell more than one story, including more than one category above. For example, a showcase portfolio might also be used for evaluation purposes, and a growth portfolio might also showcase "final" performances or products. What is critical is that the purpose(s) is clear throughout the process to student, teacher and any other pertinent audience. To elaborate on how the purpose affects the portfolio assignment let me answer the question...

### How do you Create a Portfolio Assignment?

I think of most tasks as problems to be solved, or questions to be answered. So, I find it useful to approach how to do something by thinking of it as a series of questions to be answered. Thus, I will attempt to offer a possible answer to the question above by answering a series of questions that need to be addressed when considering the design of a portfolio assignment. Those questions are:

1. Purpose: What is the purpose(s) of the portfolio?
2. Audience: For what audience(s) will the portfolio be created?
3. Content: What samples of student work will be included?
4. Process: What processes (e.g., selection of work to be included, reflection on work, conferencing) will be engaged in during the development of the portfolio?
5. Management: How will time and materials be managed in the development of the portfolio?
6. Communication: How and when will the portfolio be shared with pertinent audiences?
7. Evaluation: If the portfolio is to be used for evaluation, when and how should it be evaluated?

#### **Purpose: What is the purpose(s) of the portfolio?**

As mentioned above, before you can design the portfolio assignment and before your students can begin constructing their portfolios you and your students need to be clear about the story the portfolio will be telling. Certainly, you should not assign a portfolio unless you have a compelling reason to do so. Portfolios take work to create, manage and assess. They can easily feel like busywork and a burden to you and your students if they just become folders filled with student papers. You and your students need to believe that the selection of and reflection upon their work serves one or more meaningful purposes.

#### **Audience: For what audience(s) will the portfolio be created?**

Selecting relevant audiences for a portfolio goes hand-in-hand with identifying your purposes. Who should see the evidence of a student's growth? The student, teacher and parents are good audiences to follow the story of a student's progress on a certain project or in the development of certain skills. Who should see a student's best or final work? Again, the student, teacher and parents might be good audiences for such a collection, but other natural audiences come to mind such as class or schoolmates, external audiences such as employers or colleges, the local community or

school board. As the teacher, you can dictate what audiences will be considered or you can let students have some choice in the decision.

Just as the purposes for the portfolio should guide the development of it, the selection of audiences should shape its construction. For example, for audiences outside the classroom it is helpful to include a cover page or table of contents that helps someone unfamiliar with the assignment to navigate through the portfolio and provide context for what is found inside. Students need to keep their audiences in mind as they proceed through each step of developing their portfolios. A good method for checking whether a portfolio serves the anticipated audiences is to imagine different members of those audiences viewing the portfolio. Can each of them tell why you created the portfolio? Are they able to make sense of the story you wanted to tell them? Can they navigate around and through the portfolio? Do they know why you included what you did? Have you used language suitable for those audiences?

**Content: What samples of student work will be included?**

As you can imagine, the answer to the question of content is dependent on the answers to the questions of purpose and audience. What should be included? Well, what story do you want to tell? Before I consider what types of items might be appropriate for different purposes, let me make a more general point. First, hypothetically, there is no limit as to what can be included in a portfolio. Paper products such as essays, homework, letters, projects, etc. are most common. But more and more other types of media are being included in portfolios. Audio and videotapes, cd-roms, two- and three-dimensional pieces of art, posters and anything else that can reflect the purposes identified can be included. Some schools are putting all the artifacts onto a cd-rom by videotaping performances, scanning paper products, and digitizing audio. All of those files are then copied onto a student's cd-rom for a semester or a year or to follow the student across grades as a cumulative record. Realistically, you have to decide what is manageable. But if the most meaningful evidence of the portfolio's goals cannot be captured on paper, then you may consider including other types of media.

Obviously, there are a considerable number and variety of types of student work that can be selected as samples for a portfolio. Using the purposes given above for each type of portfolio, I have listed just a few such possible samples of work in the following tables that could be included in each type of portfolio.



Growth Portfolios: What samples might be included?	
Purpose	Some possible inclusions
a. to show growth or change over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ early and later pieces of work</li> <li>▪ early and later tests/scores</li> <li>▪ rough drafts and final drafts</li> <li>▪ reflections on growth</li> <li>▪ goal-setting sheets</li> <li>▪ reflections on progress toward goal(s)</li> </ul>
b. to help develop process skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ samples which reflect growth of process skills</li> <li>▪ self-reflection sheets accompanying samples of work</li> <li>▪ reflection sheets from teacher or peer</li> <li>▪ identification of strengths/weaknesses</li> <li>▪ goal-setting sheets</li> <li>▪ reflections on progress towards goal(s)</li> </ul>
c. to identify strengths/weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ samples of work reflecting specifically identified strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>▪ reflections on strengths and weaknesses of samples</li> <li>▪ goal-setting sheets</li> <li>▪ reflection on progress towards goal(s)</li> </ul>
d. to track development of one or more products or performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ drafts of the specific product or performance to be tracked</li> <li>▪ self-reflections on drafts</li> <li>▪ reflection sheets from teacher or peer</li> </ul>

<b>Showcase Portfolios: What samples might be included?</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Some possible inclusions</b>
a. to showcase end-of-year/semester accomplishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ samples of best work</li> <li>▪ samples of earlier and later work to document progress</li> <li>▪ final tests or scores</li> <li>▪ discussion of growth over semester/year</li> <li>▪ awards or other recognition</li> <li>▪ teacher or peer comments</li> </ul>
b. to prepare a sample of best work for employment or college admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ cover letter</li> <li>▪ sample of work</li> <li>▪ reflection on process of creating sample of work</li> <li>▪ reflection on growth</li> <li>▪ teacher or peer comments</li> <li>▪ description of knowledge/skills work indicates</li> </ul>
c. to showcase student perceptions of favorite, best or most important	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ samples of student's favorite, best or most important work</li> <li>▪ drafts of that work to illustrate path taken to its final form</li> <li>▪ commentary on strengths/weaknesses of work</li> <li>▪ reflection on why it is favorite, best or most important</li> <li>▪ reflection on what has been learned from work</li> <li>▪ teacher or peer comments</li> </ul>
d. to communicate a student's current aptitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ representative sample of current work</li> <li>▪ match of work with standards accomplished</li> <li>▪ self-reflection on current aptitudes</li> <li>▪ teacher reflection on student's aptitudes</li> <li>▪ identification of future goals</li> </ul>

<b>Evaluation Portfolios: What samples might be included?</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Some possible inclusions</b>
a. to document achievement for grading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ samples of representative work in each subject/unit/topic to be graded</li> <li>▪ samples of work documenting level of achievement on course/grade-level goals/standards/objectives</li> <li>▪ tests/scores</li> <li>▪ rubrics/criteria used for evaluation of work (when applied)</li> <li>▪ self-reflection on how well samples indicate attainment of course/grade-level goals/standards/objectives</li> <li>▪ teacher reflection of attainment of goals/standards</li> <li>▪ identification of strengths/weaknesses</li> </ul>
b. to document progress towards standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ list of applicable goals and standards</li> <li>▪ representative samples of work aligned with respective goals/standards</li> <li>▪ rubrics/criteria used for evaluation of work</li> <li>▪ self-reflection on how well samples indicate attainment of course/grade-level goals/standards/objectives</li> <li>▪ teacher reflection of attainment of goals/standards</li> <li>▪ analysis or evidence of progress made toward standards over course of semester/year</li> </ul>

*Continued on following page*



**TOOL**

Purpose	Some possible inclusions
c. to place students appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ representative samples of current work</li> <li>▪ representative samples of earlier work to indicate rate of progress</li> <li>▪ classroom tests/scores</li> <li>▪ external tests/evaluations</li> <li>▪ match of work with standards accomplished</li> <li>▪ self-reflection on current aptitudes</li> <li>▪ teacher reflection on student's aptitudes</li> <li>▪ parent reflection on student's aptitudes</li> <li>▪ other professionals' reflections on student's aptitudes</li> </ul>

**How will time and materials be managed in the development of the portfolio?**

As appealing as the process of students developing a portfolio can be, the physical and time constraints of such a process can be daunting. Where do you keep all the stuff? How do you keep track of it? Who gets access to it and when? Should you manage paper or create an electronic portfolio? Does some work get sent home before it is put in the portfolio? Will it come back? When will you find the time for students to participate, to reflect, to conference? What about students who join your class in the middle of the semester or year?

There is one answer to all these questions that can make the task less daunting: start small! That is good advice for many endeavors, but particularly for portfolios because there are so many factors to consider, develop and manage over a long period of time. In the final section of this chapter (Can I do portfolios without all the fuss?) I will elaborate on how you can get your feet wet with portfolios and avoid drowning in the many decisions described here.

**PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: PORTFOLIOS**

<b>Management Decisions</b>	<b>Possible Solutions</b>
Should the portfolio building process wait until the end or should it occur as you go?	The easiest solution is to collect work samples along the way but save the selection and reflection until the end, keeping selection simple and limiting the amount of reflection. The more involved (and more common) approach is for participants to periodically make selections and to engage in reflection throughout the process. This gives the student time to respond to identified weaknesses and to address goals set.
Will the portfolios be composed of paper or stored electronically (or both)?	<p><b>Paper Portfolio:</b> As you know, the most common form of portfolios is a collection of paper products such as essays, problem sets, journal entries, posters, etc. Most products produced in classrooms are still in paper form, so it makes sense to find ways to collect, select from and reflect upon these items.</p> <p><b>Hybrid Portfolio:</b> Other forms of products are increasingly available, however, so teachers are adding videotapes, audiotapes, 3-D models, artwork and more to the containers holding the paper products.</p> <p><b>Electronic Portfolio:</b> Since many of the paper products are now first created in an electronic format, it makes sense to consider keeping some samples of work in that format. Storage is much easier and portability is significantly increased. Additionally, as it becomes easier to digitize almost any media it is possible to add audio and video examples of student work to the electronic portfolio. A considerable amount of work can be burned to a CD or DVD or displayed on a website. An electronic compilation can be shared with a larger audience and more easily follow a student to other grades, teachers and schools. Copies can be made and kept.</p>
Where will the work samples and reflections be kept?	<p>Obviously, the answer to this question depends on your answer to the previous question about storage format. The possible solutions I describe below will assume that you have chosen an option that includes at least some paper products.</p> <p>A common model for portfolio maintenance is to have two folders for each student—a working folder and a portfolio folder. As work samples are produced they are stored in the working folder. Students (or other selectors) would periodically review the working folder to select certain pieces to be included in the portfolio folder. Usually reflection accompanies the selection process. For example, a reflection sheet may be attached to each piece before it is placed in the portfolio.</p> <p>In addition to manila or hanging folders, portfolio contents have also been stored in pizza or laundry detergent boxes, cabinets, binders and accordion folders (Rolheiser, Bower &amp; Stevahn, 2000).</p> <p>For older students, some teachers have the students keep the work samples. Then they are periodically asked to select from and reflect upon the work. Students might only keep the working folders while the teacher manages the portfolio folders.</p> <p>As a parent, I know I also would like to look at my child's work before the end of the semester or year. So, some teachers send work home in carefully structured folders. One side of a two-pocket folder might be labeled "keep at home" while the other side might be labeled "return to school." The work likely to end up in the portfolio would be sent home in the "return to school" pocket.</p>

## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: PORTFOLIOS

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<p>Who will be responsible for saving/storing them?</p>	<p>Typically the teacher keeps the contents of the portfolio, as they are usually stored in the classroom.</p> <p>Older students (and sometimes younger ones) are also given the responsibility of managing their portfolios in the classroom, making sure all samples make it into the appropriate folders/containers, remain there, are put back when removed, and are kept neatly organized.</p> <p>As mentioned above, older students sometimes are required to keep track of their work outside the classroom, bringing it to class on certain days for reflection and other tasks.</p> <p>For electronic portfolios, it usually depends on teacher preference and whether or not students have access to storage space on the network or can save samples locally, or burn them to CDs or DVD, or add them to websites.</p>
<p>Who will have access to it, and when?</p>	<p><b>Who?</b> Again, that depends on the purposes for the portfolio.</p> <p>Usually the teacher and student will have access to the working folder or the final samples.</p> <p>But, for some types of showcase portfolios, only the teacher might have access because she is constructing the portfolio about the student.</p> <p>For older students, the teacher might only have limited access as the student controls the portfolio's development.</p> <p>Parents might have access and input as samples of work are sent home.</p> <p>Other educators might also have access to final portfolios for larger evaluative purposes.</p> <p><b>When?</b> Typically, students and teachers contribute samples to a working folder as they are created. Access to a portfolio folder is gained on a more regular schedule as times for selection and reflection are scheduled.</p> <p>Parents or other educators might have access at certain intervals depending on the purpose of the portfolio and the process that has been chosen.</p>
<p>How will portfolio progress be tracked?</p>	<p>A checklist sheet is sometimes attached to the front of a folder so that the teacher or the student can keep track of when and which samples have been added, which have been removed (temporarily or permanently), when reflections have been completed, when conferences have taken place, and whether or not any other requirements have been completed.</p> <p>The teacher might just keep a schedule of when selections, reflections or conferences are to take place.</p> <p>Older students might be required to keep track of the process to make sure all requirements are met.</p>

## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: PORTFOLIOS

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What will the final product look like?	<p>Once again, this depends on the purposes and audiences for the portfolio, as well as the type of contents to be included.</p> <p>Showcase portfolios will typically have a more formal and polished presentation. A cover letter or introduction along with a table of contents might be included to provide context for a potentially wide range of readers, and to give the student or teacher a chance to more fully flesh out the student's story.</p> <p>Growth or evaluation portfolios might have a less formal presentation, unless the evaluation is part of a high stakes assessment. If the student and teacher are the primary readers, less context is needed. However, if parents are the primary or a significant intended audience, more explanation or context will be needed.</p>
What if students join your class in the middle of the process?	<p>Obviously, one advantage of choosing to build the portfolio at the end of a period of time rather than build it along the way (see the first question) is that transient students can still easily participate. They have less work to consider, but they can still engage in the selection and reflection process.</p> <p>If selection and reflection occur as work is being produced, the new student can simply join the process in progress. Some adaptation will likely be necessary, but the student can still demonstrate growth or competence over a shorter period of time.</p> <p>If the portfolio is also to be evaluated, further adjustment will need to be made.</p>

### Reflection on Samples of Work

Many educators who work with portfolios consider the reflection component the most critical element of a good portfolio. Simply selecting samples of work as described above can produce meaningful stories about students, and others can benefit from "reading" these stories. But the students themselves are missing significant benefits of the portfolio process if they are not asked to reflect upon the quality and growth of their work. As Paulson, Paulson and Meyer (1991) stated, "The portfolio is something that is done *by* the student, not *to* the student." Most importantly, it is something done for the student. The student needs to be directly involved in each phase of the portfolio development to learn the most from it, and the reflection phase holds the most promise for promoting student growth.

In the reflection phase students are typically asked to

- comment on why specific samples were selected or
- comment on what they liked and did not like in the samples or
- comment on or identify the processes involved in developing specific products or performances or
- describe and point to examples of how specific skills or knowledge improved (or did not) or
- identify strengths and weaknesses in samples of work or
- set goals for themselves corresponding to the strengths and weaknesses or

- identify strategies for reaching those goals or
- assess their past and current self-efficacy for a task or skill or
- complete a checklist or survey about their work or
- some combination of the above

**Reflection sheets**

Probably the most common portfolio reflection task is the completion of a sheet to be attached to the sample (or samples) of work which the reflection is addressing. The possibilities for reflection questions or prompts are endless, but some examples I have seen include:

Selection questions/prompts

- Why did you select this piece?
- Why should this sample be included in your portfolio?
- How does this sample meet the criteria for selection for your portfolio?
- I chose this piece because ....

Growth questions/prompts

- What are the strengths of this work? Weaknesses?
- What would you work on more if you had additional time?
- How has your \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., writing) changed since last year?
- What do you know about \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., the scientific method) that you did not know at the beginning of the year (or semester, etc.)?
- Looking at (or thinking about) an earlier piece of similar work, how does this new piece of work compare? How is it better or worse? Where can you see progress or improvement?
- How did you get "stuck" working on this task? How did you get "unstuck"?
- One skill I could not perform very well but now I can is ....
- From reviewing this piece I learned ....

Goal-setting questions/prompts

- What is one thing you can improve upon in this piece?
- What is a realistic goal for the end of the quarter (semester, year)?
- What is one way you will try to improve your \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., writing)?
- One thing I still need to work on is ....
- I will work toward my goal by ....

Evaluation questions/prompts

- If you were a teacher and grading your work, what grade would you give it and why?
- Using the appropriate rubric, give yourself a score and justify it with specific traits from the rubric.
- What do you like or not like about this piece of work?
- I like this piece of work because ....

### Effort questions/prompts

- How much time did you spend on this product/performance?
- The work would have been better if I had spent more time on ....
- I am pleased that I put significant effort into ....

### Overall portfolio questions/prompts

- What would you like your \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., parents) to know about or see in your portfolio?
- What does the portfolio as a whole reveal about you as a learner (writer, thinker, etc.)?
- A feature of this portfolio I particularly like is ....
- In this portfolio I see evidence of ....

As mentioned above, students (or others) can respond to such questions or prompts when a piece of work is completed, while a work is in progress or at periodic intervals after the work has been collected. Furthermore, these questions or prompts can be answered by the student, the teacher, parents, peers or anyone else in any combination that best serves the purposes of the portfolio.

### Other reflection methods

In addition to reflection sheets, teachers have devised a myriad of means of inducing reflection from students and others about the collection of work included in the portfolio. For example, those engaging in reflection can

- write a letter to a specific audience about the story the portfolio communicates
- write a "biography" of a piece of work tracing its development and the learning that resulted
- write periodic journal entries about the progress of the portfolio
- compose an imaginary new "chapter" that picks up where the story of the portfolio leaves off
- orally share reflections on any of the above questions/prompts

### Reflection as a process skill

Good skill development requires four steps:

- Instruction and modeling of the skill;
- Practice of the skill;
- Feedback on one's practice;
- Reflection on the practice and feedback.

Reflection itself is a skill that enhances the process of skill development and virtually all learning in innumerable settings. Those of us who are educators,



# TOOL

for example, need to continually reflect upon what is working or not working in our teaching, how we can improve what we are doing, how we can help our students make connections to what they are learning, and much, much more. Thus, it is critical for students to learn to effectively reflect upon their learning and growth.

As a skill, reflection is not something that can be mastered in one or two attempts. Developing good reflective skills requires instruction and modeling, lots of practice, feedback and reflection. As many of you have probably encountered, when students are first asked to respond to prompts such as "I selected this piece because..." they may respond with "I think it is nice." Okay, that's a start. But we would like them to elaborate on that response. The fact that they did not initially elaborate is probably not just a result of resistance or reluctance. Students need to learn how to respond to such prompts. They need to learn how to effectively identify strengths and weaknesses, to set realistic goals for themselves and their work, and to develop meaningful strategies to address those goals. Students often have become dependent upon adults, particularly teachers, to evaluate their work. They need to learn self-assessment.

So, the reflection phase of the portfolio process should be ongoing throughout the portfolio development. Students need to engage in multiple reflective activities. Those instances of reflection become particularly focused if goal-setting is part of their reflection. Just as instruction and assessment are more appropriately targeted if they are tied to specific standards or goals, student identification of and reflection upon strengths and weaknesses, examples of progress, and strategies for improvement will be more meaningful and purposeful if they are directed toward specific goals, particularly self-chosen goals.

Once opportunities for reflection (practice) take place, feedback to and further reflection upon student observations can be provided by conversations with others. Conferencing is one tool to promote such feedback and reflection.

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**Student-Led Conferences: A Growing Trend**

Sharon Cromwell

Education World®

[http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/admin112.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin112.shtml)

For years parent-teacher conferences have been the primary means of parent-teacher communication. But now, many schools are trying something new—student-led conferences that communicate not only how a student is doing but also what the student has to say about how they are doing and why. Putting the responsibility for the articulation of learning in the hands of the student is a natural progression in performance assessment that has rewards for teachers, students, and parents.

Parent-teacher conferences -- we all know how they go. Parents troop into classrooms to talk with teachers about their children's progress in school. Often, the process feels rushed, and parents leave feeling vaguely dissatisfied, as if they didn't really get what they came for.

For years that process has been the norm, but now it is changing. In more and more schools, students are leading conferences, and, overall, the word is that they're doing a fine job.

Many teachers themselves speak enthusiastically of the advantages of student-led conferences over teacher-led ones. "We found the [student-led] conferences most beneficial," said Keith Eddinger of the Marcus Whitman Middle School in Rushville, New York. "From a teacher's perspective, we were able to get a better picture of each child. It forced us to sit down with each student and review strengths and weaknesses. This conversation often told us the students learned more than perhaps we had measured through conventional assessments."

Eddinger added, "Our post-conference reviews with parents and students were overwhelmingly positive."

John Osgood, of C. L. Jones Middle School in Minden, Nebraska, found that "comments [about student-led conferences] from parents and board members were very positive."

Another staff member, Dick Philips, said, "Most parents listened to their child. It was interesting listening to [children] explain low grades to their parents. It did open the lines of communication."

"Several parents really liked it because it gave them an opportunity to see their child's work," said Sue Yant, another staff member. Yet "some [parents] said they hoped we [would hold] the traditional conference once a year."

**STUDENT PREPARATION**

"The format is important, but I believe the success of a student-led conference is most determined by how well students are prepared," wrote Laura Hayden, a seventh-grade communications teacher at Derby Middle School in Derby, Kansas, in *Letting Students Lead Parent Conferences*, an article published by the National Association of Elementary School Principals in *Middle Matters*.

The conference format at Hayden's school had students show parents some of their work and explain their grades in a student-led conference. Each team could conduct conferences a bit differently. Hayden's team used an open house arrangement in which students and parents visited all team members' classrooms, but other teams held the entire conference in one classroom.

The significance of format aside, Hayden focused her students on preparation. At the beginning of the school year, she had students set up a binder to contain a portfolio as well as graded work. She explained that students had to keep their binders orderly because they would use them to lead their conferences.

A week before the conferences, Hayden's team sent home a letter informing parents of the conference and the fact that their child would lead it. About three days before conferences, she had students prepare portfolios of their work to date, including a special project, a quiz, a homework assignment, and one assignment from which they felt they had learned the most. Students also wrote a reflection on their grades and study habits. They set goals for the next semester and organized their graded work section.

The day before conferences, teachers role-played, pretending to be the student, with the student playing the teacher or the parent. Teachers modeled, for example, how to explain a poor grade to parents, and they gave students a checklist of what to cover in the conference.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

"The preparatory time is worth it," Hayden wrote, "especially when you hear a struggling student explaining what he or she learned from an assignment and taking responsibility for the score he or she achieved."

"[Students] need to understand that they are in control of their own efforts to learn the material," said Barbara Rommel, superintendent of the David Douglas School District in Oregon. (Source: "New Method Puts Student in Charge," an article published in the *Oregonian* newspaper.)

The Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century requires students to meet higher standards. By having students assess how they are progressing toward those standards, educators say, students will know how far they've come and how far they have to go to meet the standards.

"It helps them accept responsibility for their learning," said Patti Kinney, principal of Talent Middle School in Oregon.

"I like being able to tell my side of the story," Josh Whitney-Wise of Milwaukie, Oregon's, McLoughlin Middle School told the *Oregonian*.

### ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Educators acknowledge that there are disadvantages as well as advantages to student-led conferences. Although parent attendance seems higher for student-led conferences than for teacher-led ones, a parent's failure to attend a student-led conference leads to a great deal of disappointment for a student who has worked hard to prepare.

Another disadvantage is that some parents want to spend more time with their child's teacher, receiving his or her viewpoint. Nearly all schools with student-led conferences will let parents make separate appointments to confer with teachers.

For the most part, parents support the concept of student-led conferences, though some support them with slight reservations. "My daughter was in a class that did student-led conferences a couple of years ago," said one parent of a child at Jones Middle School. "I think the object was to make the child feel a part of the whole process, to get them in tune with their own progress. ... As a parent, I felt like I still needed some info from the teachers and wanted more. ... But I do think the student gets a new perspective on their grades. ... Personally, I don't think it would be good to do this often, but once a year is good. When you ask if they were 'beneficial,' I can say yes and no. They were more beneficial to the student than to the parent."

But the advantages, say most teachers who have participated in student-led conferences, outweigh the downside. Student accountability is mentioned again and again by educators as a plus for student-led conferences. Another plus is the way even a struggling student can produce something positive for a conference, an art project or an essay, perhaps, that wouldn't show up in a report card grade. Overall, talks with educators indicate, student-led conferences are a growing trend.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

#### Books

- *A School-Wide Approach to Student-Led Conferences: A Practitioner's Guide* by Patti Kinney, Mary Beth Munroe, Pam Sessions; National Middle School Association, June 2000 (paperback).
- *Student-Led Conferencing Using Showcase Portfolios*, by Barbara Benson and Susan Barnett, Corwin Press, Inc., December 1998, paperback 160 pp.

**Talent Middle School**

Talent, Oregon

[http://www.phoenix.k12.or.us/tms/stories/storyReader\\$16](http://www.phoenix.k12.or.us/tms/stories/storyReader$16)

Talent Middle School (TMS) serves approximately 700 students. TMS has compiled an impressive student-led conference handbook, available in its entirety on their website, and excerpted here. The handbook gives detailed directions for teachers, students and parents on preparation, execution and reflection of the student-led conference process, including sample portfolio pages, goal setting sheets, and a play-by-play of the conference.

**Student-Led Conferences Overview**

"...this practice is the biggest breakthrough in communicating about student achievement in the last century. When students are well prepared over an extended period to tell the story of their own success (or lack thereof), they seem to experience a fundamental shift in their internal sense of responsibility for that success. The pride in accomplishment that students feel when they have positive story to tell and tell it well can be immensely motivational. The sense of personal responsibility that they feel when anticipating what it will be like to face the music of having to tell their story of poor achievement can also drive them to productive work."

— Rich Stiggins, Phi Delta Kappan, November 1999.



**Critical Elements:**

- Student is in charge
- Adult serves as facilitator
- Students are taught to share work in a meaningful, purposeful fashion

**Benefits:**

- Authentic assessment
- Practice in self-evaluation
- Motivational
- Sets realistic goals
- High parent involvement
- Increases student accountability, self-confidence, and self-esteem
- Strengthens skills of organization, leadership, speaking
- Clarifies student expectations

**Make decisions on:**

- Purpose (why determines format and timing)
- Facilitating
- Timeline
- Responsibilities
- Conference schedule
- Parent education/communication

### **Establish these practices in school prior to trying SLC:**

- Portfolio System
- Self-reflections/evaluations as part of learning process

### **Work Samples:**

- Should focus on skills/processes (writing w/drafts, problem-solving, applied math, research, fitness summary, science labs, etc.)

### **Goal Setting:**

- Summarize strengths/growth areas from self-reflections
- Create clear, doable goals w/action plan

### **Logistical Decisions:**

- Work collection
- Organization of work (table of contents, cover sheets, etc)
- Missing work
- Dear Parent Letter
- How to teach process

### **Evaluation:**

- Feedback from teachers, parents, students
- Refine and revise and revise and revise...

### **Teacher and Facilitator Roles**

In your role as a classroom teacher you will...

#### Early in the school year

Design work that:

- Emphasizes multiple skills and processes
- Addresses state/local curriculum standards
- Emphasizes processes as well as quality of product
- Uses examples of "real work," not work contrived for show

Teach and practice the skills required for self-reflection

Collect work in portfolios or other long-term storage system

#### Within a few weeks of the conference

Help your students sort through their classroom work and choose examples for the conference

Ask students to review self-reflections of chosen work and complete a summary reflection of work to date

Complete a cover sheet that will rate identified study and/or citizenship skills

Help students practice sharing their work from your subject area



## PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: PORTFOLIOS

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### **In your role as a conference facilitator you will...**

#### Before the conference

Schedule conferences according to the school's agreed upon procedure

Help student organize their work from all classes based on a table of contents

Help students work through the goal setting procedure

Teach the conference process to your students

Allow time for students to practice, practice, practice

Send out a reminder invitation just before the conference

#### During the conference

Set up room with "stations" appropriate for conferencing

Meet and greet parents

Give quick overview of process, help student and parent(s) "settle" in, and move out of the area

Monitor progress of conference from a distance.

Return to conference around the goal-setting piece. Offer suggestions if needed

Help close the conference, ask for questions, hand out feedback forms, notes, etc., encourage parents to use the drop-in time

#### After the Conference

Celebrate with the students for a job well done!

Conduct a feedback session with students (written or discussion)

Fill out staff evaluation form

Revisit goals with students at a later date (6 weeks or so from conference)



**Sample Reflection — Math**

**Portfolio Cover Letter**

Complete the following paragraphs and staple your letter to your best, worst, and most challenging papers. Make sure to label your papers "best," "worst," and "most challenging." Remember this is your letter. You may change or add paragraphs or whatever. Use this as a general outline.

Dear

Mathematical topics we've studied are...

I learned that...

I chose \_\_\_\_\_ as my "best" work for the following three reasons:

I chose \_\_\_\_\_ as my "worst" work for the following three reasons:

I chose \_\_\_\_\_ as my "most challenging" work for the following three reasons:

I feel I progressed in...

I feel I need to work on...

Sincerely,



**Sample Reflection — Writing**

**Self-Reflection — Writing**

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First, look over the writing you have done this trimester then thoughtfully answer the questions below. Think of yourself as a writer!

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1. What does someone have to do in order to be a good writer?
2. What is the most important or useful thing you've learned as a writer?
3. What one thing in writing do you feel more confident about than you did at the beginning of the school year?
4. What could you teach someone about writing?
5. Which writing trait is your strongest? Why?
6. Which writing trait do you feel is your weakest?
7. Which mode of writing do you enjoy the most/ Why?
8. What still confuses you?
9. What can I (the teacher) do to help you be a better writer?
10. What kind of writing would you like to do in the future?
11. What are your writing goals for the next trimester?



**Goals for Success**

**TMS Goals for Success**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

My strengths are:

- A.
- B.
- C.

I need to work on:

- A.
- B.
- C.

First Goal

\_\_\_\_\_

To achieve this goal, I will

- A.
- B.

Second Goal

\_\_\_\_\_

To achieve this goal, I will

- A.
- B.

Third Goal

\_\_\_\_\_

To achieve this goal, I will

- A.
- B.

People who can help me attain these goals are:

Distractions that may get in the way of accomplishing these goals are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Case Manager Signature



### Student Procedures

#### Student Procedures for Conferencing

1. Introduce your parents or guardian to your case manager.
2. Explain you will be sharing your fall portfolio during the conference.
3. Briefly review the Table of Contents to give an overview of what is in your portfolio.
4. Read your "Dear Parent" letter.
5. Present your work.
  - Share the information on the cover sheet
  - For each piece share:
    - What the assignment was
    - What knowledge or skills you learned by doing it
    - What process you went through to complete the piece
    - Key portions of your self-reflection by reading them aloud
6. Share your report card with your parents.
7. Goal Setting
  - Explain the two goals you have set
  - Write a third goal with your parents
8. Parent homework letter
  - Give your parents their "assignment sheet" and ask them if they would be willing to write you a note as explained on the sheet. What they write can be kept at home or returned to school to put in your portfolio.
9. Closing
  - Thank your parents for attending your conference.



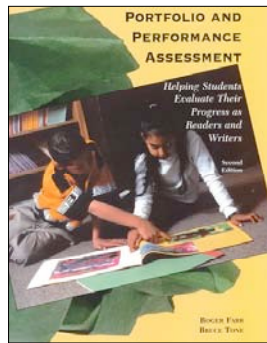
The following books were recommended by school practitioners. The reviews are drawn from book jackets, publishers, and websites.

**Portfolio and Performance Assessment: Helping Students Evaluate Their Progress as Readers and Writers**

Bruce Tone & Roger C. Farr (1998)

Wadsworth Publishing

<http://www.wadsworth.com/>



The second edition of *Portfolio and Performance Assessment* updates the growing nature of the trend toward portfolio assessment as a highly effective methodology. It effectively develops youngsters as self-assessors while it wedds assessment and instruction as inseparable. The text provides a logical approach to developing and relying on either portfolio or performance assessment with the emphasis in the revision shifting more to the selection of an appropriate performance test design and battery. The book is a rich source of ideas for

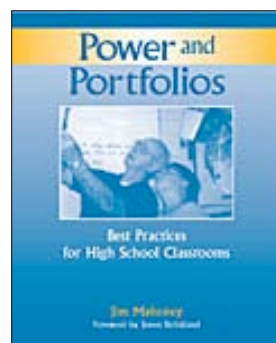
starting, building, and interpreting student language portfolio collections. Ample appendices provides the teacher with targeted sources and black-lined tools for duplication and use in the classroom.

**Power and Portfolios: Best Practices for High School Classrooms**

Jim Mahoney

Heinemann Publishing

<http://www.heinemann.com/shared/products/0529.asp>



Portfolios are a driving force in student motivation and growth. Some are so stunning that they are the very models of what writing-reading workshops set out to do—to engender in students confidence in their own abilities and to inspire them to become sophisticated users of language. But how do you set up such a workshop and how can you achieve such remarkable results?

For many years, Jim Mahoney has conducted workshops on the workshop approach to middle and senior high school teachers. Now he has written about the day-to-day practices of the writer's and reader's workshop, explaining the theory and the nitty-gritty details of putting together a portfolio in a way that goes beyond being a mere recipe. From his first chapter on the sharing of power to subsequent chapters building on Nancie Atwell's principles of time,

ownership, and response, Jim shows how to structure and run a classroom with portfolios as the centerpiece.

And Jim truly practices what he preaches—when he asks his high school students to write, he writes alongside them or in front of them, using a transparency and letting them see the tentative moves, corrections, and adjustments a writer makes. Literary letters, essays, stories, poems—any and all genres are grist for the mill of producing what Jim calls "a writing state of mind." His success in promoting this state is apparent in the many compelling student samples integrated throughout his text.

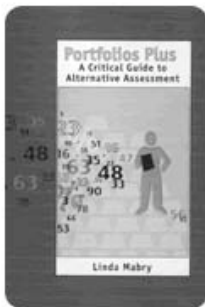
If you are interested in making the move from a teacher—directed classroom to a student-centered one, in learning from and with your students, and in sharing the joys and the power of reading and writing, you find no better guide than Jim Mahoney and his *Power and Portfolios*.

### **Portfolios Plus: A Critical Guide to Alternative Assessment**

Linda Mabry (1999)

Reviewed by: *Horace*. Vol.18, #2. Winter 2002.

[http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces\\_res/215](http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/215)



Coalition teachers require multidimensional exhibitions of skills and understanding to know that students have met our standards. Coalition students need opportunities to demonstrate their learning over the course of months and years. Setting up such assessments demands time, deep connections and professional competence. We know that standardized tests provide only a limited opportunity for students to demonstrate what they know. Linda Mabry's *Portfolios Plus* contextualizes these convictions, showing how performance-based assessments work and why.

While making clear her "advocacy for individualized assessment of students and for the professional judgments of the teachers who, interacting with them every day, are taken to be in the best position to recognize and assess their educational progress," Mabry examines a range of assessment methods. Presenting the benefits and drawbacks of the spectrum of testing approaches, rationales for testing, and scoring methods. Though Mabry makes her bias evident, *Portfolios Plus* usefully explains the assessments of all sorts. The book includes a brief chapter on the balance of equity in various approaches, five examples of personalized assessment systems, and a concise "Portfolio Planner" meant to aide teachers in designing an assessment system.

*Portfolios Plus* empowers teachers both to appreciate the strength of complex assessment systems and to apprehend the limitations of standardized tests.

**NOTES:**

## **PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: PORTFOLIOS**

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