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Portfolio Development

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

When individuals hear the word *portfolio*, many different images come to mind. Artists think of compiling their best work (e.g., paintings, pottery, portraits, and sculptures) for review, whereas a portfolio for teachers often contains gathered samples of lesson plans, units of study, and professional documents that reflect the knowledge, skills, and beliefs of the teacher. In today's digital world, portfolios are often times presented in a variety of formats, including through websites, on CDs or DVDs, or through various software.

Whereas the artist's portfolio describes each piece of art in writing, giving details about artistic design, teachers' portfolios describe their success and that of their masterpieces, their students. Teachers who develop portfolios reflect on each piece of work, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the changes they would make in their teaching related to student success. The teacher's portfolio is used for self-evaluation or external review. Both of these images are correct representations of portfolios, because they both have several specific components:

1. They have a specific *purpose*. The artist's portfolio shows his or her artistic abilities, whereas the teacher's portfolio shows his or her knowledge, skills, and abilities related to teaching.
2. They are developed for a specific *audience*. The artist's audience is a potential employer, and the teacher's is himself or herself or external reviewers.
3. They contain work samples, commonly called *evidence*. Evidence is the "stuff" or "things" that are put into the portfolio. The artist's evidence would be the paintings, pottery, portraits, and sculptures. The teacher's evidence would include student work, lesson plans, units of study, and other professional documents.
4. They have *reflections*. Both the artist and the teacher would have written thoughts on the evidence contained in the portfolio.

These examples show that two products can look different but can still be considered portfolios. A portfolio is not merely a manila file filled with assignments or work, nor is it a scrapbook of memorabilia. Campbell, Cignetti, Melenyzer, Nettles, and Wyman (1997) stated that a portfolio is an organized, goal-driven collection of evidence. For educators, portfolios have become more commonplace over the past 5 years. The necessity of national board certification

and the adoption of alternative methods of evaluation for teacher candidates and practicing teachers have paved the way. Portfolios have emerged as viable assessment tools for both teacher candidates and practicing teachers. They are a way for teachers to document their professional development, for preservice teachers to measure knowledge, or for teachers to provide evidence for the certification process (Adams, 1995; Krause, 1996; Tierney, 1993; Wolf, 1996). There are three different types of portfolios: *process, product,* and *showcase.* Although each type is compiled for a different audience, all have a developer, purpose, specific audience, and *reflection section* (discussed in Chapter 3) for reflecting on the evidence.

A person chooses whether to develop a process, product, or showcase portfolio based on the purpose of its development. The purpose, otherwise identified as the "why" of portfolio development, is the driving force that determines its organizational design.

Three of the Four Components of Portfolios	Three Types of Portfolios
Purpose	Process
Audience	Product
Evidence	Showcase

WHAT IS A PROCESS PORTFOLIO?

A process portfolio shows a person's performance over a period of time. Its purpose isn't to *prove* something, but rather to *improve* something. The goal of this portfolio is to evaluate a teacher's progress in one or more areas over a given period of time. Using writing as an example, the purpose of a process portfolio would be to show how writing is taught in the classroom and the improvement of students' writing over time. The developer would choose evidence that would show how he or she taught writing and the progress of the students. Reflections would focus on how writing was taught and the development of the skills and abilities of the students as writers. For example, the teacher might describe a lesson focusing on writing and the successes and areas where the students can improve. Next, the teacher might reflect on what should happen next in the classroom in relation to writing. Evidence would be chosen as the portfolio is developed over the school year. It would represent the successes and weaknesses of the writing program so that a clear portrayal of the teacher's progress is given. Different teachers using writing as a focus could have different evidence, depending on their own development. The process portfolio is commonly used by teachers who want to focus on the development of skills and knowledge.

Process Portfolio

A teacher is creating a process portfolio with the following goal: incorporating cooperative learning into his or her classroom over a school year.

Purpose:
To document the integration of cooperative learning into the classroom

(*continued*)

Audience(s):

Self and principal

Types of Evidence:

Staff development certificate and handouts on cooperative learning, lesson plans incorporating cooperative learning over a school year, student work from cooperative groups, copy of grade book showing "grades" from cooperative learning assignments, student surveys about the cooperative learning process, self-evaluation notes from the teacher showing changes made after each cooperative learning lesson, teacher's summary of thoughts about the cooperative learning process

Placed in:

A three-ring notebook

EXAMPLE 1

Sample Process Portfolio

Background:

Mr. Clark, a kindergarten teacher, is interested in developing a portfolio to show his process as a teacher, specifically in using developmentally appropriate practices(DAP). He wants to show his knowledge, skills, and abilities in this area.

Purpose:

To track progress as a teacher using DAP

Audience:

Mr. Clark and principal

Developer:

Mr. Clark

Organization:

Portfolio kept in a three-ring notebook

Evidence:

Mr. Clark chooses evidence throughout the year related to using DAP. He includes the following evidence:

1. A philosophical statement about the use of DAP in the classroom
2. Lesson plans documenting the use of DAP (several subjects over the year)
3. Unit plans documenting the use of DAP (several subjects over the year)

4. Videotape showing several lessons—one in September, one in December, one in March, and one in May
5. Journal by teacher documenting on a day-to-day basis the implementation of DAP
6. Work from several different students (at different levels) throughout the year
7. Anecdotal records documenting progress of students throughout the year
8. Entries in teacher's journal comparing DAP strategies with those previously used

Other evidence would be determined by Mr. Clark, depending on the progress of his portfolio.

Reflections:

Mr. Clark wrote reflections about his progress each month. At the end of the year, he wrote a summary and an analysis of the entire process.

Assessment:

Each month, Mr. Clark did a self-assessment by writing reflections, and his principal assessed his progress at the end of the school year. Based on Mr. Clark's self-assessments and the principal's summative assessment, Mr. Clark determined his next steps in relation to using DAP.

Why Is a Process Portfolio Chosen?

Mr. Clark wants to track his progress over a year. Each teacher may have a different time line for his or her progress.

EXAMPLE 2

Sample Process Portfolio

Background:

Mr. Sauls, a beginning middle school science teacher, is interested in developing a portfolio to show his progress toward using inquiry methods and the acquisition of inquiry skills by students. He teaches sixth grade and has assessed that his students haven't used inquiry skills or processes before. Because he is a beginning teacher, Mr. Sauls has used only inquiry lessons during his student teaching experience.

Purpose:

To track the improvement of students' inquiry skills and processes, and the teacher's ability to facilitate inquiry lessons (two goals)

Audience:

Mr. Sauls and his mentor

Developer:

Mr. Sauls

(*continued*)

Organization:

Portfolio kept in an expandable folder (by lesson topic), with one section containing data charts on students in relation to specific skills and processes, along with grade sheets

Evidence:

Mr. Sauls developed his portfolio over a 9-week grading period. As a beginning teacher, he and his mentor (Mrs. Groome) decide that a shorter time period would be better so that he could reflect on his practice holistically and adjust it midway throughout the semester. In addition, this was a goal on his initial growth plan (an evaluation goal-setting tool for beginning teachers).

He included the following evidence:

1. A list of intended goals and objectives for the 9-week period related to inquiry skills and processes (five inquiry lessons over 9 weeks)
2. A journal in which he wrote his reflections after each inquiry lesson
3. A data chart marked with x's for each child to denote whether the inquiry process and skills were observed by the teacher or assessed through written work
4. Sample work from a variety of students (bad and good work) for each of the five lessons
5. An observation from the mentor for two of the inquiry lessons
6. Students' self-evaluation form (a guided question sheet) that was used after three of the inquiry lessons
7. Students' grades on inquiry lesson
8. Assistant principal evaluation of one inquiry lesson (observation)

Reflections:

Mr. Sauls wrote journal reflections about his progress and his students' progress and knowledge after each inquiry lesson.

Assessment:

At the end of the 9-week period, he met with his mentor, and they reviewed all of the materials to decide what type of progress was made in the area of inquiry lessons.

Why Was a Process Portfolio Chosen?

Mr. Sauls wanted some data on his effectiveness as a beginning teacher. He wanted to improve his instruction and the skills of his students. He knew there would be improvements and adjustments to be made, and this portfolio type allows for them. In addition, his mentor helped decide on this type of portfolio because it was "less threatening" and allowed for collaboration.

Other Examples of Process Portfolio Goals

1. Mrs. Kujawski wants to incorporate manipulatives into her high school geometry class for two units of study to improve students' conceptual understanding of geometric concepts. She attends a workshop on manipulatives and then writes lesson plans to include them. She tracks grades and uses word problems on a formal (graded) and informal (nongraded) basis to analyze student understanding over a 9-week period. Finally, she conducts a summative evaluation of her

progress over the 9 weeks in relation to this goal and adjusts and expands her manipulative pro-gram over the next 9-week period.

2. Mr. Alexander wants to use graphic organizers in his high school English class. He devel-ops four organizers to use over a semester and uses them in only two of his four 11th-grade stan-dard English classes. His evidence compares the progress of two sections that used the graphic organizers with the two sections that didn't use them.

3. Ms. Cato is a chorus teacher at the high school level. To motivate her beginning chorus class, she wants to incorporate the use of hand instruments and rhythmic exercises and methods into her class. She uses these over a semester. Her reflection includes tracking participation, having students complete a self-evaluation on the process, and writing her own self-evaluation.

WHAT IS A PRODUCT PORTFOLIO?

A product portfolio is a specific set of evidence developed over a short period of time to meet a desired outcome. This type of portfolio is similar to a project. Each person develop-ing a product portfolio has identical or very similar pieces of evidence. For teachers, product portfolios would be created around a particular goal or initiative. Teachers may create them to show how a school goal is being met, to seek a license, or to compete for an award. Any time teachers need to be compared using the same criteria, a product port-folio is a valid measure. This portfolio has specific, required evidence so assessors can compare developers consistently against the set criteria.

Product Portfolio

Each teacher is creating a portfolio to show the implementation of a school-wide discipline program.

Purpose:
To document how each teacher participates in and supports the new school-wide discipline approach

Audience:
Teacher and principal

Types of Evidence:
Listing of rules and procedures, copy of discipline log for each class (part of plan), parent contact log, parent conference record, motivation incentives

Placed in:
An expandable folder

Using writing again, a teacher's product portfolio could be developed to show the implementation of the "writing process" in the classroom (steps including brainstorming, draft writings, editing, revising, and final draft of the written product). Imagine that a district sets a goal that each teacher will use the writing process in his or her classroom, regardless of the subject(s) taught. The purpose would be to show how a teacher implements the writing process into day-to-day classroom activities, lesson plans, unit plans, and student assessment methods. For example, each portfolio could contain staff-development information, lesson plans, unit plans, and student work demonstrating each step of the writing process and assessment rubrics or checklists. Reflections would include descriptions of how the writing process was included in the classroom, the strengths of and improvements needed for implementing the writing process, and how changes would be made during the next lesson or unit. All portfolios developed would be assessed using the same criteria, probably by the principal in this example.

EXAMPLE 1

Sample Product Portfolio

Background:

Jane Goodman, a middle-level educator, teaches science to students in the seventh grade. As part of a district initiative, all science teachers are implementing a lab-based curriculum. It is a prescriptive curriculum that includes a teacher's manual with lab procedures for the entire school year (one concept per week for 28 weeks).

Purpose:

To document the implementation of the lab-based science curriculum across the district

Audience:

District science supervisor

Organization:

Notebook divided into 28 sections

Evidence:

Student work samples and lesson plans are included for each of the 28 sections.

Reflection:

Ms. Goodman writes a reflection at the end of each week and at the end of the school year.

Assessment:

The district supervisor reviews the portfolio. In addition, the supervisor interviews Ms. Goodman and holds small-group conferences with clusters of teachers. The portfolio is used as the basis for these assessment activities. The results of these conferences, interviews, and portfolio contents allow the district supervisor and teacher to set goals for the next year.

Why Is a Product Portfolio Chosen?

The district supervisor chose a product portfolio because she wanted to compare how teachers implemented the new curriculum. By choosing a product portfolio, she can see the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers and the curriculum as a whole.

EXAMPLE 2

Sample Product Portfolio

Background:

Suzi Greene and Gwen Stowe are high school Spanish teachers who teach Spanish 1 at All Good High School. As part of a district initiative, Spanish has become a required subject to meet the district goal of having all graduates become bilingual. It is a mandate that all students, regardless of background and desire, take Spanish. As a result, many of the students in the class are unhappy about taking Spanish. In addition, the class has a wide range of experience with Spanish— students with no background, those who had Spanish in middle school, and native speakers. Of course, this creates a unique teaching situation for these two veteran teachers, who had students who took the course as an elective in the past. They decided to create a product portfolio with identical evidence to determine the success of three subsets of students: native speakers, those who had some middle school background and would have elected to take Spanish, and those who were given Spanish as a mandate based on district policy. Of course, all three of these subsets could be found in each class period.

Purpose:

The main purpose was to assess the attitudes and achievements of all students in Spanish 1 classes. The plan was to use three proven strategies along with peer tutors in the class (a new idea for these teachers). In addition, attitudinal surveys would be conducted. The portfolio would be developed over one semester, because the high school is on block scheduling.

Audience:

Mrs. Greene and Ms. Stowe, with the results shared with their department chair

Organization:

Hanging crate with different sections for different classes and three files within each section for subsets of students within each class (students with middle school background, native speakers, no middle school background)

Evidence:

1. Student work from the use of each of the three proven strategies divided by three subsets
2. Teacher data sheet showing grades based on different strategies (copy of grade book with strategies highlighted in three colors)
3. Teacher reaction about student motivation and participation based on each of the three strategies. This reaction is done in two ways: overall and by using three subsets

(*continued*)

4. Copy of peer teaching procedures
5. Peer teachers' (native speakers') written responses to the peer teaching program
6. Tutored peers' written responses to the peer teaching program
7. Student Attitude Informal Survey Results by subsets

Reflection:

Mrs. Greene and Ms. Stowe wrote their own reflection and then analyzed students' responses to the peer tutoring program and its strategies.

Assessment:

Because the purpose of the portfolio is to improve the instruction and attitudes of students, data were analyzed by subsets (by strategy) and attitudes were analyzed by the categories positive, negative, and neutral. Results from the surveys and grades helped Mrs. Greene and Ms. Stowe determine which strategies were effective in motivating students. The peer teaching model was reviewed by the three stakeholders: the teacher, the peer tutor, and the peer who was tutored. Results were summarized and presented to a department chair at a meeting by the two teachers.

Why Was a Product Portfolio Chosen?

Mrs. Greene and Ms. Stowe chose a product portfolio so they could compare "apples with apples" in relation to strategies and peer tutoring. By choosing a product portfolio, they could see the strengths and weaknesses of each strategy and the peer tutoring model as a whole and analyze each component by subgroups.

Other Examples of Product Portfolios

1. Mrs. Williamson wants to analyze her students' progress using authentic assessments in eighth-grade algebra over one unit of study. She develops three authentic assessments, reflects on their impact, does an analysis of the students' grades, and has the students write a reflection about connecting mathematics to life.
2. Erin Gray is a business teacher who teaches an introduction to desktop publishing class. The state has revised the curriculum to include a goal that focuses on the development of authentic ads for the school and community. Teachers are required to turn in a small portfolio to assess the implementation of this authentic goal in the curriculum. This is a new challenge for Erin, a second-year teacher. She develops relationships with the different booster clubs within All Good High School and has her students develop 10 ads for the various booster organizations over a 6-week period. These will appear in the school newspaper and on posters around the community. As required, she keeps a copy of each of the ads, writes about the development and success of this goal, has an evaluation sheet from each booster organization, and includes student reflections on the development of real ads.
3. Mr. Guidry uses a product portfolio to assess the yearly progress of his students' U.S. history grades by goal in comparison to state or national tests that evaluate the same goals.

EXAMPLE 3

Sample Product Portfolio

Background:

Thomas Adams and Gabriela Pinto are in their first education class at A+ University. They are going to be visiting schools and doing specific educational assignments at their schools.

Purpose:

To document the education assignments required for their Education 100 class (Introduction to the School)

Audience:

Instructor, Dr. Mark L'Esperance

Organization:

Three-ring binder divided into five sections with a cover page

Evidence:

Five specific assignments along with a reflection for each assignment

1. School tour and technology assessment write-up
2. Teacher observation
3. Student interview (at lunch)
4. Teacher interview
5. Ten-minute student activity

Reflection:

One for each of the five assignments plus a final reflection

Assessment:

Portfolio is assessed by Dr. L'Esperance

Why Is a Product Portfolio Chosen?

Because students do specific assignments, the product portfolio is the natural choice. The portfolio design allows students to begin to understand the reflective piece and the organization of a portfolio that is required later in the program.

Showcase Portfolio

A high school mathematics teacher is searching for a job. He creates a showcase portfolio.

Purpose:

To obtain employment in teaching

Audience:

Potential employers

Types of Evidence:

Sample lesson plans, classroom management plans, teaching evaluations, college transcripts, letters from students and student teaching supervisors, philosophy of education paper, resume, pictures of students taught, videotape of teaching, sample student work

Placed in:

Three-ring notebook

WHAT IS A SHOWCASE PORTFOLIO?

Showcase portfolios are collections of a person's best work, chosen by the individual. These portfolios are often used for job interviews or teacher-of-the-year competitions. The purpose of the portfolio is for a teacher to showcase his or her best work in one or more areas. For example, the teacher could develop a showcase portfolio to prepare for a teaching award. The portfolio would contain evidence chosen by the developer. This evidence would be what the developer believes to be his or her best work in teaching. Some developers might place several best lessons in their showcase portfolios, whereas other teachers might add a series of lessons that highlight various teaching strategies. Reflections for any showcase portfolio would focus on why evidence was chosen and why it is deemed best work. The main idea of this portfolio is that the developer chooses what to showcase and how to organize it. Unlike the other two types, this portfolio is completely individualized and is based on the perceptions of the developer about himself or herself.

EXAMPLE 1

Sample Showcase Portfolio

Background:

Mark Smith is a business education teacher looking for a high school teaching position.

Purpose:

To obtain a teaching position

Developer:

Mr. Smith

Organization:

The evidence is collected in a three-ring binder under four areas determined by Mr. Smith: teaching, management, computer skills and knowledge (because this would be an integral part of the business curriculum), and involving parents and the community.

Evidence:

Mr. Smith would include sample evidence under each area. This includes the following: lesson plans, unit plans, student work, videotapes and pictures of teaching, resume, philosophy of education position paper, management plan, classroom rules, sample work using different computer software including processed documents showing word-processing skills and spreadsheets, samples of letters sent to parents, and a parent communication plan.

Reflection:

One is written for each area. Mr. Smith answered the following questions: (1) Why was the evidence chosen? and (2) What are the strengths of the work?

Assessment:

By the person who interviews Mr. Smith

EXAMPLE 2

Sample Showcase Portfolio

Background:

Katlyn Easley, Elyse Bullock, and Cathy Stang are all middle school teacher candidates. They all attend A+ University, which is noted for its teacher education program. As part of their internship, they are required to create a product portfolio based on specific middle school standards for teaching.

Purpose:

To document that each intern can meet specific middle school standards for teaching based on their best work. Interns choose their best work to meet standards.

Audience:

The interns (Katlyn, Elyse, and Cathy), their supervising teacher, and their university advisor

Organization:

Notebook is divided into three sections based on three specific goals. One reflection for each goal is based on specific guided questions.

(*continued*)

Evidence:

Evidence for each goal

Goal 1 (instruction): unit of instruction, student work, pre–post data, reflection

Goal 2 (classroom management): discipline plan, case study tracking three adolescents with specific discipline issues and their resolution.

Goal 3 (social and emotional development): three character education lesson plans that specifically focus on social and emotional development along with student work

Reflection:

One for each goal and then an overall reflection at the end

Assessment:

The clinical teacher and university advisor review the portfolio. In addition, the clinical teacher and university advisor both write a reaction to the showcase work.

Why Is a Showcase Portfolio Chosen?

A showcase portfolio allows the candidates to compile their best work and build on that for job interviews.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES IN THE THREE PORTFOLIOS?

All three types of portfolios are purposeful collections of evidence with thoughtful reflections. The difference between the portfolios revolves around three components: (1) the purpose of the portfolio, (2) what type of evidence is collected, and (3) how the evidence is collected. The "what" and "how" of evidence collection is a direct result of the portfolio's purpose. For example, in a process portfolio with a purpose of showing the progress of teaching skills, the "what" of evidence would be a collection of documents that show the obtainment of teaching skills, while the "how" would be the developer's choice. For the product portfolio with the purpose of demonstrating the use of a specific teaching strategy, the "how" and "what" are the same for all developers. In a showcase portfolio with the purpose of highlighting a teacher's best teaching skills, the "how" and "what" of evidence are both determined by the developer.

THE DIGITAL PORTFOLIO: WHERE DOES THAT FIT IN?

Almost everyone you know has access to a computer or owns one or more of their own. College freshmen are often required to purchase a computer before arriving on campus for the first time. Technology has infiltrated most jobs and has become a minimum expectation for teachers. Technology standards are adopted by state departments of education, national organizations, and school systems. In most teacher education programs throughout the country, technology standards are commonplace and integrated into teacher preparation. The most commonly adopted teacher preparation standards are the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards. These standards serve as a guideline for improving teaching and learning of educators (http://www.iste.org, 2008). These are presented in Appendix G of this book.

Digital Blog

What about hardware and software for a digital portfolio?

Designing a digital portfolio requires access to a variety of hardware and software. Although most schools have these technologies on hand, many individuals may not. Even in school settings, the absence of enough equipment to ensure quick and easy access may be an issue complicating digital portfolio design and frustrating portfolio developers. There are many choices for software. Creators can use simple software, websites, or packaged software to create a digital portfolio.

A digital portfolio is a product, process, or showcase portfolio captured, organized, saved, or presented in a digital format. The digital portfolio typically contains the same "stuff" as a traditional portfolio, but items are presented in a digital format. The digital portfolio is paperless model of a traditional portfolio that can contain digital photographs, scanned images, captured screen images, text files, audio files, video files, electronic presentations, and even links to Web resources. The digital portfolio, which may be saved and distributed on a CD-ROM or other large-capacity disk or on a Web server, provides a rich and interactive environment for students to practice their technology skills while showing competency through their portfolio.

A digital portfolio uses technologies that allow the portfolio developer to collect and organize portfolio artifacts in many digital formats (such as audio, video, graphics, and text). Often, the terms *electronic portfolio* and *digital portfolio* are used interchangeably. However, there is a distinction: An electronic portfolio contains artifacts that may be in analog form, such as an audio- or a videotape, or may be in computer-readable form. In a digital portfolio, all artifacts have been transformed into computer-readable formats.

Check for Understanding

It is important for readers of this book to develop an understanding of content prior to moving to the next section. Use the following questions to check comprehension:

1. What are the three types of portfolios?
2. What are the differences between the three types?
3. What are the four common components of all portfolios?
4. Give an example for each type of portfolio.
5. What is a digital portfolio?

If all questions were answered correctly, you are ready to move on to the next section. If all answers were not clear, reread part or all of this section.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF PORTFOLIOS FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Table 2–1 gives readers an opportunity to compare how the three types of portfolios can be used to demonstrate a school goal.

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TABLE 2–1 Different Types of Portfolios for Elementary Teachers				

Background: An elementary school has implemented a new reading program. The principal has decided to require teachers to build portfolios in relation to the reading program. This chart shows how each type of portfolio can be used in relation to the new program. The teachers are the developers. All three types of portfolios, process, product, and showcase, are identified, with the four components outlined for each.

Type	Purpose	Audience	Sample Evidence	Reflection Focus
Process	To show the teacher's individual growth in using the new reading program over 1 year	Principal, teacher*	1. Lesson plans showing reading program being implemented 2. Student work 3. Audiotapes of various students reading once a month for the school year 4. Running records showing successful and struggling students' progress over the year 5. Parent conference write-ups indicating the new program had been implemented	For each piece of evidence, the teacher could describe how it is related to the reading program and the strengths and weaknesses of implementing the program.
Product	To show that each teacher had implemented specific components of the reading program	Principal	Specific components outlined by the principal at the beginning of the year. Each teacher would have the same types of evidence; e.g., all teachers might be required to have lesson plans showing the correlation to the reading program.	The teacher would focus on the strengths of the required evidence.
Showcase	For teachers to show their best work in relation to implementing the reading program	Principal	Teachers would choose evidence that shows their best attempts at implementing the reading program. This could include: 1. Effective lesson plans 2. Excellent student work 3. Running records of students who showed great progress	The teacher would reflect on each piece of evidence, emphasizing the strengths of the evidence in relation to the reading program.

*For improving teaching.

WHAT IS A TEACHING PORTFOLIO?

Portfolios, in general, are used by professionals in many different types of careers. A teaching portfolio is specific to the education profession. Shulman (1994) defines a teaching portfolio as "a carefully selected set of coached or mentored accomplishments substantiated by samples of student work and fully realized only through reflective writing, deliberation, and serious conversation" (p. 8). Painter (2001) sees a teaching portfolio as a documented history of a teacher's learning process viewed against a set of teaching standards. Successful development of a complete portfolio is through the deliberate selection of evidence and thoughtful reflections on those artifacts, which provide insight into teachers' growth.

Teachers can develop portfolios at any stage of their careers. McNelly (2002) states that portfolios can be used to gauge teacher effectiveness and student achievement, changing teacher evaluation processes from narrow to broad and deep. This can begin with preservice teachers at the university level who are preparing to enter the profession and progress to master teachers who choose to apply for national board certification. A teaching portfolio contains evidence that shows the knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions of a teacher at his or her particular stage of development. The portfolio is usually organized around the central components of teaching, including planning and teaching a curriculum, student-centered instruction, student development, strategies, assessment practices, classroom management procedures, and professional development opportunities. The portfolio can take on many different shapes and sizes. The quality should be based on the depth of the evidence and reflection. Evidence in a teacher's portfolio would minimally include lesson plans, classroom procedures and management plans, sample tests, student work, professional conference materials, committee work, and parent-contact logs. For each of these entries, a written reflection would be included.

A teacher's portfolio is a useful component for a teacher at any stage of development. Preservice teachers are acquiring the skills and knowledge to teach in their college or university program. Through a portfolio, they can document their acquisition of knowledge of teaching and their ability to teach. University faculty can have preservice teachers reflect on their emerging abilities and knowledge. Over the 2–3 years preservice teachers spend in their teaching programs, their views and concrete knowledge of teaching change quickly. Evidence and reflections can help document the rapidly changing views and knowledge of a preservice teacher.

Once preservice teachers complete the required components of their teacher education program, they enter the induction phase of their careers. The induction phase encompasses the first to fourth years of a teacher's career. During this period, the teacher is commonly called a beginning teacher. At the onset of this stage, most beginning teachers have a probationary license, which allows them to teach during this trial period.

In the initial phase, teaching portfolios are used for licensure purposes or reemployment. In this portfolio, beginning teachers create portfolios that document their ability to teach effectively. At the end of their probationary period (the length of which is determined by each state), beginning teachers move from holding an initial license to a continuing license (one that is renewable with course or workshop credit every 5 years or so). At this time, teachers usually have tenure. For a continuing teacher, the teaching portfolio becomes an option to demonstrate professional growth based on personal needs or interests. For example, a teacher might be interested in learning more about children's learning styles (Dunn & Dunn, 1978) and implementing this theoretical approach in his or her classroom. In his or her teaching portfolio, evidence would include information about

learning styles and examples of implementing this approach in the classroom. Evidence could include the new classroom layout showing learning-styles centers, lesson plans emphasizing the approach, and classroom procedures that support the change. Portfolios for professional development are an option to traditional evaluation methods for teachers, such as observations by principals. Continuing teachers have tenure, so the portfolio option frequently becomes their choice. However, in some states, portfolios are used as an assessment tool for teacher licensure renewal. These cycles are usually 5 years in length.

Once teachers have taught for 5 years or more, they usually enter the next stage of their careers—the master teacher stage. The master teacher is one who would have the skills, knowledge, and beliefs reflected in the National Board standards. These teachers can choose to apply for National Board certification through the NBPTS. The successful teaching portfolio compiled for National Board certification demonstrates how the teacher is ranked against a set of standards in his or her field. At this stage, the teaching portfolio is an option for teachers.

No matter what stage a teacher is in, a teaching portfolio can be developed. The purpose of the portfolio changes at each stage of a teacher's career. However, at each stage the portfolio would contain evidence related to teaching and reflections that outlines the teacher's knowledge, abilities, and beliefs. Figure 2–1 lists examples of portfolio evidence. Refer to different chapters in this book for information and examples of teaching portfolios at different levels.

Check for Understanding

1. What is a teaching portfolio?
2. How is a teaching portfolio different from other professionals' (i.e., artists') portfolios?

LEGAL ISSUES IN PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT

No teacher can create or design a teaching portfolio without reviewing the legal parameters. Teachers, in particular, are sensitive to children's rights and want to portray an image of doing the right thing in relation to the privacy issues of their students. The rule of thumb for legal issues is to look at the audience. If the audience is someone besides the developer, immediate supervisor (i.e., principal), or state licensing agency, have the students' parents sign a release form allowing their children's work to be included in the portfolio. Many school districts have release forms on file. The legal ramifications for parent release vary from state to state and district to district. Check this out carefully with your school. Teachers should also send an informational letter explaining the purpose of the portfolio. Figure 2–2 provides an example of a letter. These two items can be combined, as seen in the sample. If the developer is submitting the portfolio to his or her immediate supervisor or to a licensing agency, no release forms are needed. The bottom line for teachers should be to rule on the side of conservatism. Assume that you need release forms from outside reviewers even if your colleagues don't think you need them.

Although the release form is the mainstay for legal defense, the following guidelines are good to follow to uphold the ethical rights of teachers, especially if the audience is external:

1. Mark out all students' names.
2. Refer to students anonymously in reflections.
3. Don't identify students in pictures.
4. Be sensitive about children with special needs. Don't include them by name or by picture in a portfolio.

- Lesson plans
- Unit plans
- Philosophy of education paper
- Pictures of classroom activities
- Videotapes of lessons taught
- Student work
- Differentiation methods for exceptional children
- Case studies
- Action research projects
- Lesson plans showing varied teaching and learning strategies
- Planning guides
- Copies of a lesson plan book
- Community involvement
- Photos of student performances
- Letters from students and parents
- Photos of student work
- Workshops attended (certificates)
- Position papers
- Student projects
- Parent volunteer information
- Classroom organization strategies
- Teacher projects
- Classroom rules
- Parent communication
- Team newsletters
- Professional development certificates
- State curriculum correlation with lesson plan
- Pacing guides
- Test preparation strategies
- Listing of motivation strategies
- Grading policies
- Department or grade-level meeting minutes
- Committee memberships
- School newsletters with highlights of class accomplishments
- Field trip information (with students)
- Classroom floor plans
- Technology competencies of the teacher
- Peer reviews
- Self-evaluations
- Professional development plans
- Transcripts
- Volunteer work (teacher)
- Related work experience

FIGURE 2–1   Types of portfolio evidence.   Compiled by the authors from a review of more than 300 portfolios.

Sept. 1, 2009

Dear Parents,

    I am a student teacher in Mrs. Adams's class at Bright Days Elementary School. As part of my college requirements, I am creating a teaching portfolio. I would like to include sample work from your child. Your child's name will not appear on any work included or in the written text describing it. Your signature below allows me to include your child's work in my portfolio. Thank you for your support. Feel free to contact Mrs. Adams if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Ms. Lee

I give permission for my child's work to be included in Ms. Lee's teaching portfolio.

Parent's signature _____

Date _____

FIGURE 2–2   Sample personalized release form.

The best advice is to first check school policies regarding legal issues and, second, to use common sense when deciding about types of evidence. Many people who read this section will think that there are more legal issues related to portfolios. There are very few laws related to this, but there are ethical guidelines that should be followed.

Videotaping is another area of legal consideration, because school districts require a release for videotaping. These releases should be kept on file by the teacher. Students whose parents would not give permission should *not* be included in the videotape. According to federal law, children with special needs should not be videotaped.

Check for Understanding

1. When must you use a release form?
2. What are the ethical guidelines to follow when building a portfolio?

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A PORTFOLIO

After a teacher decides on the purpose of his or her portfolio, there are some general guidelines, regardless of the teacher's stage of development. Further information for specific teacher stages is provided later in the book. General guidelines include:

1. Save Everything. Either keep evidence in a box in the classroom (throw it in) or create files for different types of evidence.

2. Choose a Container. Portfolios can be placed in three-ring notebooks, file boxes, or folders or can be created digitally. Notebooks or CD-ROMs are the most common types of containers used by developers.

3. Customize for External Reviews. Use plastic sheets to house evidence. This will give the portfolio a professional look and keep evidence neat.

4. Create a Professional Cover. This will give a reviewer his or her first impression. The developer's name and picture are minimal components. Inspiring quotes, clip art, borders, and a title (for a professional portfolio) add character to the cover page.

5. Organize the Portfolio. If the portfolio is developed for external audiences, a table of contents is key. Tabbing different sections allows for easy access. These small features allow reviewers to easily view the contents.

6. Begin with an Introductory Section. Developers should include a section on themselves that includes a resume and other pertinent information, such as letters of reference and a statement of philosophy.

7. Word-Process Everything. Cover sheets, sections, tables of contents, tabs, and so forth should *not* be handwritten. A professional appearance is important.

8. Spelling and Grammar Are Very Important. Developers should use standard English and proofread their work. Enlist help from a colleague if needed. Again, professional work is important.

9. Videotapes Should Be Heard. If a videotape is chosen or required as evidence, a developer should make sure that his or her voice is heard when taping. Although the videotape does not have to be professional, *hearing* the teacher is important. Enlist a colleague to help with the videotaping. Videotape can also be transferred to a CD easily if the video camera is digital. By using a CD, snippets of the teaching episode can be placed on different tracks.

10. Videotape Technical Tips. Use a tripod, check for glare, have light in the background, do a sound check, and cut off extraneous sounds. Consider a practice run to check for these things.

11. Videotape Content. Tapes should be watched to make sure "purpose" has been met. Watching the tape from a teaching and learning perspective will allow developers to "see" the taped episode from both the teacher's and the students' points of view.

Closing Thoughts

This chapter has given readers an overview of types and general logistics of portfolio development. The portfolio is a powerful assessment tool for teachers. Its ability to "tell the story" of the developer allows for depth and breadth that isn't possible through any other medium. Specific portfolio types allow teachers to choose evidence around a defined purpose, resulting in an effective product.

Chapter Activities

1. List and describe the components of portfolios and the different types of portfolios.

2. Give examples of information (types of evidence) that would be included in each type of portfolio.

3. Apply the information you know about the types and components of portfolios to describe a situation when a specific type of portfolio would be useful and the reasons why or how.

4. Using information in your own classroom and your experiences, what information from your classroom, teaching, and planning could be included in a portfolio, and how would it strengthen the portfolio? What would be demonstrated by including those items?

5. Choose evidence from your classroom and teaching and classify that evidence into different categories to fit into each type of portfolio.

Websites

Teacher Portfolio Contents Examples
http://www.tooter4kids.com/portfolio.htm

One Example of Web Portfolio
http://webportfolio.info/

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