

Portfolios

Adapted from *Fair Test Examiner*, Winter 1994-95

What They Are	What They Aren't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Projects• Writing• Open-ended questions• Related to curriculum• Measurements of relevant, real-life skills• Various ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge• Comparisons of each child's progress to his prior work• Encouraging creative and higher order thinking• Occurring regularly throughout the year• Part of regular classroom activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple choice• Fill-in-the-blank• Fill-in-the-bubble• Separate from curriculum• Memorization of isolated facts• Limited ways for students to demonstrate their skills• Comparisons of each child's progress with a national sample• Encouraging rote memorization• Occurring once or twice a year in contrived circumstances

Roger's Basic Rules for Portfolios

Adapted from a presentation by Dr. Roger Farr

- Total school commitment is a critical component.
- Portfolios belong to students and they should be allowed to decorate them and have regular access.
- Portfolios should include ideas as well as finished and unfinished work.
- Students should build working portfolios first and then pull from them to create showcase portfolios.
- Teachers should hold individual student conferences at least four times a year for 10-15 minutes.

Note: these should not be group conferences. During the conferences, follow these rules:

Never ask more than 3 good questions.

The child must talk more than the teacher.

The teacher and child must be seated at eye level.

Portfolios should always be in the hands of the child.

Conferences should be well-planned and scheduled on a regular basis.

What "Stuff" Goes into Portfolios?

The possibilities are endless. Much of what goes into a portfolio depends upon the grade level and the curriculum. Here are some suggestions from Roger Farr (1996) and Lenski, Riss and Flickinger (1996).

- Benchmark assessments, such as school district outcomes
- Free choice items, such as reading and writing drafts, notes and finished work.
- Reading/writing response logs
- Student reflections
- Student organization plan: "How did you organize your stuff?"
- Student and teacher notes
- Book lists
- Photographs
- Reading contracts
- Audiotapes of student reading
- Awards
- Science experiment data
- Disk with Power Point Presentation (my suggestion for the technology age!)

Personal Comments about Portfolios

Note: I've seen some incredible portfolios in middle and high school classes. Each student is given a list of required writing styles to include in their portfolios and this becomes an inherent part of their table of contents.

Most of the staff at my school prefers to have student-led conferences. Report cards are a very small but necessary part of the conference. Here is a sample of a summary sheet that students may use to guide their conference. There are others that are just as good, if not better. When I was still in the classroom, I used a different format. One of the things I had my students tell their parents was how they could help them achieve their improvement goals. After parent conferences, each parent wrote a letter to their child and mailed it to the school. When all of the letters had arrived, they opened them and responded in writing. I have to say that some of the letters were real tear starters! The parents were often very moved to hear their children describing their progress at school.

Student-Led Conference Summary Sheet

Name:

These are things I do well:

These are things I need to improve:

This is how I can improve:

My goal for the remainder of the school year:

Please write a positive message to me.