Assessment Handbooks Series

Portfolio Assessment

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Portfolio Assessment



Ministry of Education



Portfolio Assessment

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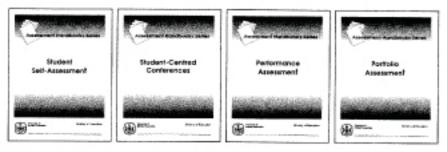
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About this document

Rationale

Surveys of teachers (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1992) and studies (Bachor and Anderson, 1991, 1993) show that assessment practices in B.C. classrooms are changing. Teachers are seeking alternatives to traditional testing methods by rethinking their assessment practices and changing their evaluation techniques. With this evolution in practice have come practical questions regarding methods for assessing student achievement. A key request has been for support in the development and implementation of assessment methods.

The Assessment Handbooks Series



This series has been developed to provide guidance for teachers as they explore and expand their assessment repertoires. The four handbook series includes Student Self-Assessment, Student-Centred Conferences, Performance Assessment and Portfolio Assessment. For the sake of clarity, the handbooks separately address each of these assessment methods. However, in practice, the methods are not used in isolation. For example, self-assessment is an important component of portfolio assessment and both can contribute to a successful student-centred conference.

Each of the handbooks contain a definition and rationale, reflective questions, ideas for getting started, and samples in varying forms. While each handbook includes information specific to a particular type of assessment, cross-referencing is used to identify important links between them. Student Self-Assessment is particularly central to the other handbooks as it expands on self-assessment, goal setting and establishing criteria, topics common to the whole series.

This Handbook

Portfolio Assessment offers ideas and strategies that will expand the knowledge of both novice and experienced portfolio practitioners. It discusses the different types of portfolios, why to use them, how to get started, and includes organizational ideas, case studies, and sample forms to include in portfolios.

What is portfolio assessment?

Portfolio assessment is a method of gathering student work samples for the purpose of evaluating student knowledge and learning. The process includes student participation in the selection of work, in criteria and goal setting, and through self-assessment. Students and teachers collaborate in assessing and evaluating student learning from evidence in the portfolio collection, then use this information to make plans and set goals for further learning.

"A portfolio is a carefully crafted portrait of what someone knows or can do."

Black, 1993

Portfolios are purposeful collections of a student's work that show the student's effort, progress and achievement over time. Portfolios include:

- a selection of student work
- · guidelines for content selection
- · criteria for evaluating process and products
- · evidence of student reflection

Why use portfolio assessment?

"The use of portfolios engages students in constructing a story—a long-term account—of what and how they learn."

Wolf, 1989

Portfolio assessment offers teachers, students, and parents a broad view of student learning by providing a place to document processes in learning as well as students' final products. In addition to offering benefits for all partners, portfolio assessment promotes student involvement in, and responsibility for, their own learning.

For teachers, portfolio assessment:

- · integrates assessment with instruction
- provides opportunities for teachers and students to collaborate
- provides concrete evidence for evaluation
- gives feedback on individual student performance
- can serve as a focus for student-centred conferencing
- provides evidence to support reports to parents

For students, portfolio assessment:

- · develops organizational and decision making skills
- incorporates opportunities for self-assessment and goal setting
- · provides evidence for revisiting and resetting goals
- provides opportunities for teachers and students to collaborate
- promotes responsibility for student's own learning
- provides concrete evidence for evaluation
- sets a focus for student-centred conferences

"... feedback from studentteacher conferences and from peer and self-evaluations, and analyses of portfolios, can be used to promote students' awareness of and thoughtfulness about their individual strengths and weaknesses as learners. Nurturing students' abilities to evaluate their own work and their peers' work may be one of the more effective ways of improving learning."

Case, 1992

For parents, portfolio assessment:

- · increases involvement in their child's learning
- · allows them to see their child's development over time
- provides direct evidence of their child's skills and learning
- provides concrete evidence for evaluation and goal setting
- · sets a focus for student-centred conferences

"The girls were very proud of their portfolios and eager to share them with us. It was interesting to see what my girls felt about how they have done on their work and to see what was important to them."

Parent, 1993

Types of portfolios

While the characteristics of a portfolio collection will differ widely among teachers, portfolio collections generally fall into three categories: working, presentation and cumulative.

 A working portfolio is an ongoing collection of selfselected samples of work that are used to highlight the students' efforts, progress, achievement and reflections (writing samples, photographs, self-assessment, etc.).

- A presentation portfolio can include samples selected by both the student and the teacher. The collection consists of student work samples representing learning and growth, collected for the purpose of making presentations. The presentations could include: student-centred conferences, interim reports, interviews with employers and/or educational institutions, etc.
- A cumulative portfolio is a collection of selected samples of student learning that is taken from either a working or a presentation portfolio and is passed on to the next year's teachers. A cumulative portfolio may also include student progress reports and become part of the student's permanent school record, or be used with future employers and other educational institutions. The cumulative portfolio may be compiled collaboratively by the student and the teacher with final approval made by the teacher.

"Portfolios are obviously more than collections of artifacts. They are ... a reason for talking. And, depending on the way the talk goes, the portfolio can take many different forms."

Murphy and Smith, 1990

Portfolio Planning Chart

Portfolio	Purpose	Content	Audience
Working	to help students assess and evaluate their work to help students notice patterns in their learning	many samples of student work from across the curriculum or within a subject	student and teacher
Presentation	to assist students in discussions about their learning	selected samples that represent a few chosen aspects of student work	teachers parents future employer advanced educational institutions
Cumulative	to help educators know where students are in their learning to assist in planning student programs to help students develop resumes	selected samples of student work student progress reports	future teachers administrators future employer advanced educational institutions



The contents from the three types of portfolios can be interchanged (e.g. contents from a working portfolio can be used in a presentation and/or a cumulative portfolio).

Setting the stage for portfolio assessment

Be prepared to give students some choice about the contents of their portfolios.

Classroom Environment

If portfolio assessment is to become an integral part of learning, teachers need to create a classroom environment which promotes:

- student choice/autonomy
- · learning represented in a variety of ways
- individual and cooperative work
- sharing ideas
- risk taking

In such an environment teachers can provide ongoing opportunities for students to self-assess, set goals, and collect samples for their portfolios. Initially the structure may come from the teacher, but as students and teachers become more familiar with portfolio assessment, increased student autonomy and choice can be integrated into the planning. The classroom environment is important for promoting self-assessment and goal setting, two important components of portfolio assessment.

"Portfolios ... ought to include students' narratives about how they produced the contents and about what they learned. Students' written reflections about their learning might be among the most valuable pieces in the portfolios."

Black, 1993

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is an essential component in portfolio assessment. Students need to be able to analyze their work and work habits in order to establish criteria and goals for further learning. Self-assessment is an ongoing process of students getting to know themselves as learners by reflecting on their performances, products, thinking and learning.

udent Name:	Dute:	
o complete this evaluation, you sek over the time period that yourers. Reflect upon your succ reas you would like to further	our collection esses, growth, and	
Success:	Cover Sheet for Po	etfolio Entry
Evidence:	Student Name:	
	Project:Student Comments:	
	Two reasons I chose this item a	re:
Growth:		
	I want you to notice:	
	Next time I might:	
	Other comments:	
Areas to Develop:	Signature:	Dune:
	Teacher Comments:	
CONTRACTOR CANDOCOCCA	Two positive things I noticed an	e:
	One specific area to work on is:	
	Other comments:	
	Signature:	Dotes

Goal Setting

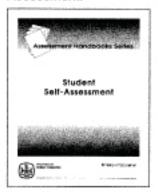
Goal setting is an important aspect of portfolio assessment. The purpose of students reflecting on their portfolio collections is to see which areas need improvement and to set goals for further achievement. Portfolios provide an excellent opportunity for students to revisit their program and set (or reset) goals for future learning. Within a class the goals for a portfolio collection will be individual to each student.

Further Preparations

After considering the importance of classroom climate, selfassessment and goal setting, teachers can continue to set the stage for portfolio assessment by:

- gathering samples of authentic (real) portfolio use (resumes, teacher work files, modelling/photography, artists)
- · teaming with other teachers for ideas and support
- networking with other school and district contacts
- reading (see reference list)

For more information on self-assessment and goal setting see Student Self-Assessment.





Consider contacting the:

Authentic Assessment Consortium Attn: Rob Morrison School District #36 (Surrey) Planning, Research & Evaluation Dept

& Evaluation Dept. 14225 - 56th Ave. Surrey, BC V3X 3A3

(604) 596-7733 (ext. 214)

Fax: (604) 596-7941

Getting started



Trust yourself and your students and be patient with the process.

Description:	Date:
Purpose	
Guidelines	
Evaluation Crite	ria
Reflection Activ	ities

"IPortfolio assessmentf has added a new dimension to my teaching dnd evaluation methods and it has given me another method of encouraging life-long learners."

Teacher, 1993

There are four basic elements for setting up portfolio assessment:

- setting purposes for portfolio collections
- · identifying guidelines for portfolio collections
- developing evaluation criteria
- · providing for student reflection

In order for portfolio assessment to be effective, students need to be involved in each of these four steps of the process. Initially the structure may come from the teacher; however, as students and teachers become more familiar with the various aspects of portfolio assessment, more student autonomy and choice can be integrated into the process.

Setting Purposes for Portfolio Collections

A crucial element to beginning portfolio assessment is deciding on a purpose. Teachers choosing to implement portfolio assessment need to establish what it is they want the portfolio to accomplish (refer back to "Why use portfolio assessment?" pg. 2). There may be more than a single purpose for using portfolio assessment, and teachers may choose a combination of reasons for using portfolios. For example, a teacher might identify the following purposes:

- · to provide evidence to support progress reports
- to promote student responsibility for their learning

Important in determining the purpose is deciding who the audience will be for the portfolio—teachers, students, peers, parents, other educators, etc. Teachers can then determine which type of portfolio will suit their purpose, and in which area of the curriculum to begin.

Identifying Guidelines for Portfolio Collections

Guidelines determine both the quantity of samples within a portfolio collection and the format of the collection. The format may or may not include tables, records, or indexes, depending on the age of the students involved. Guidelines for a primary working portfolio may be such that all work is to be included. As students become more experienced, the guidelines may be more specific. Teachers can work collaboratively with students to identify guidelines for the collections.

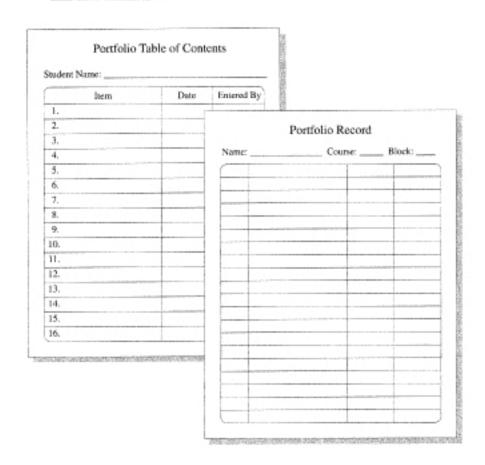
Sample Guidelines for a Working Portfolio

- Include a table of contents
- Choose samples of work from each topic that will be covered during the term.
- Choose different samples of work from each topic (e.g. reports, notes, pictures of models, experiments).
- Choose samples of the same work at different times throughout the term.



Tips:

- The same material may be used to reveal different areas of learning by changing the guidelines and evaluation criteria.
- The portfolio collection can be kept dynamic by creating new guidelines and evaluation criteria which direct the student to select new portfolio material as well as remove selected material.



For more information on student involvement in criteria setting see Student Self Assessment.



Content guidelines for an intermediate science portfolio could include: table of contents, 2 lab reports, labelled diagram, peer assessment, summary of group project, student/ teacher conference summary, etc.

Developing Evaluation Criteria

One of the keys to helping students become responsible for their learning is to involve them in the assessment and evaluation process. Including students in the development of evaluation criteria for evaluating progress and achievement gives them a better understanding of:

- what is important and valued in a particular discipline
- evaluating their own and their peer's achievements
- their own roles in working towards classroom standards
- how and when the contents of the portfolio will be evaluated

As students become more experienced with portfolio assessment, they may become more involved in developing criteria for the collection. The evaluation of the portfolio may include setting criteria for fulfillment of the established guidelines. For example, meeting all the requirements of the content guidelines may constitute part of a term mark.

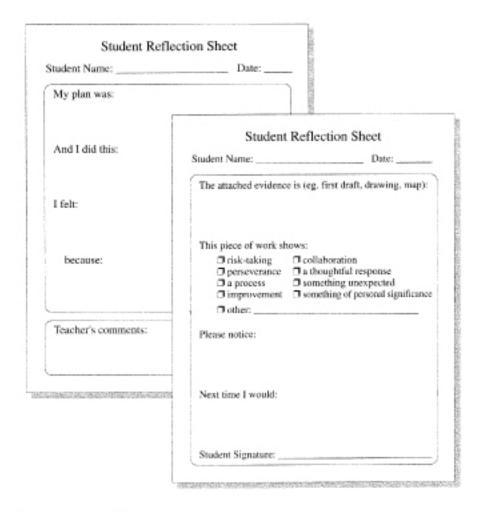
Providing for Student Reflection

Reflection is a self-assessment activity where students learn to look at their own learning. It encourages students and teachers to develop the habit of pausing to think about their learning in terms of where they've been, where they are going, and how they will get there. Involving students in reflecting on their learning:

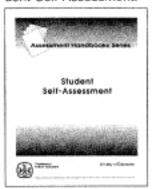
- helps them view mistakes and risk-taking as avenues for continued growth
- builds confidence in their own abilities
- improves study skills by helping to focus on what is known and what is not known
- encourages taking responsibility and ownership for their own learning
- helps develop realistic self concepts
- builds self esteem

Portfolio collections should include evidence of student reflection such as:

- · thinking clusters, webs, concept mapping
- reflective journals
- reflection frames or sheets
- audio tapes



For more information on student reflection see Student Self-Assessment.



J

Many students have not had the opportunity to self-assess and initially may be uncomfortable with the process. They are very much used to relying on external feedback. Be patient with them and yourself.

"I think that portfolios are a good way to learn. After a while you can look back at what you aid and see the changes in your work since then."

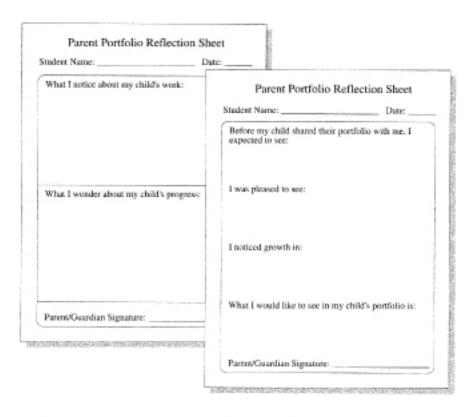
Student, 1993

Organizational ideas

Use this as a teaching and learning experience about decision making, organizing, assessing and evaluating work.

To introduce portfolio assessment in the classroom, teachers may initiate the process by:

- holding a discussion with students to discover what they already know about portfolios
- sharing samples of authentic (real) portfolios
- discussing the process for setting up the portfolio,
 working together to set up the guidelines and evaluation criteria
 - discussing the management of the portfolio
 - use of record/index/table of contents
 - importance of date stamping all materials
 - deciding when items will be placed in the portfolio
 - deciding when items are added, removed or interchanged between portfolios
 - informing parents/guardians of the use of portfolios



Sources

- Essays
- Projects
- Tests
- Quizzes
- Labs
- Notebooks
- Presentations
- Reflection Samples
- Discussions
- Debate / Panel

Formats

- File Folder
- Accordion Folder
- Binder
- Boxes
- Tote Tray
- Scrap Books

"The portfolio process is developmental. There are no magic formulas. Teachers must be prepared to be risk takers, along with their students. Discovering the possibilities of what portfolios can achieve for each group of students and for each individual student is an 'energizing' activity."

Teacher, 1993

Sources and Storage

Collections

- Videotapes
- Compact Disks
- Paintings/Drawings /Sketches
- Observation Notes /Checklists
- Self-assessment Sheets
- Work Samples
 Photographs
 Audio Tapes

- Computer Disks

Storage

- Large Box
- Plastic Containers (milk crates)
- File Cabinet

Case studies

These two case studies are not picture perfect examples of portfolio assessment, but they are examples of two teachers willing to share their initial experiences with portfolio assessment, the negative as well as the positive. Their willingness to share is a wonderful example of risk taking and provides encouragement to others to begin the process.

CASE STUDY

Presentation Portfolio

Business Education 10

- Purpose
 - students will demonstrate their understanding of each unit covered during the term
 - to facilitate discussions between student, teacher and parents
- Physical Structure
 - · a binder and a computer disk
- 3. Content Guidelines
 - · only finished work
 - one piece of work demonstrating understanding of each topic in a unit
 - examples can be assignments, projects, group projects, tests, etc.
- 4. Selection of Material
 - students will select work the demonstrates their knowledge in the content areas
 - if the work is part of a group project, photocopies will be accepted
- Access to Portfolio
 - · portfolio will be kept in the classroom
 - · only teacher, student, and parents
- 6. Time Line
 - · work will be selected at the end of each unit of study
 - portfolio will be reviewed with the teacher at end of each reporting period
 - · shared with parents at the end of a reporting period
 - · students keep the portfolio at the end of the year

CASE STUDY

Working Portfolio

I used portfolios this year so that students could evaluate their own work and note the improvement they had made throughout the year.

Success I had:

- students enjoyed having a choice for the contents and took pride in their accomplishments
- students improved in their ability to self-assess their work and this placed ownership on them to show improvement
- parents appreciated seeing the portfolios before the report card went home and felt they were better prepared for interviews
- portfolios gave me concrete information (in one place) for writing report cards

Some difficulties:

- · finding time to place work in their portfolios
- helping students evaluate their work in a meaningful way and then setting specific goals

What I would do differently:

- · set time in the timetable for portfolio related work
- collect work more often and specify more directly what I would like them to choose from
- · place more work of my choosing
- take more time with goal setting and teach more directly how to evaluate their work

Conclusions:

I would do it again!

"When I'm getting my portfolio ready to take home I have fun reading my best stories over again. The best part is when my Mom and Dad tell me how good and neat my work is."

Student

Some final thoughts

Portfolios are purposeful collections of student work (evidence of process and products) that show the student's effort, progress and achievement over time. Portfolio assessment stresses the importance of student responsibility in their own learning by including them in the process through selfassessment and by involving them in establishing criteria and goal setting. The reasons for choosing to introduce portfolios as part of a teacher's assessment strategy are many, and Stenmark summarizes them extremely well.

"I felt better about having something to back up my test scores. The criteria for evaluating the portfolio were listed and a cover sheet had all the assignments included. Students were to check off this list and then select four samples of their work along with two assignments of my choosing. The work chosen had to show variety and evidence of thought. They had to explain what they had picked and why they had picked it. They were allowed to make revisions and attach them to the originals along with some reflections on why they felt revisions were necessary. The students liked the portfolio. They felt that if they 'messed up' they could work it out without being penalized. They liked being able to decide and then pick the quality of the work."

Stenmark, 1991

Glossary

Assessment Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information about student learning, what they know, are able to do, and are trying to do.

Evaluation The process of making judgments and decisions based on the interpretation of evidence of student learning gathered throughout assessment. Evaluation might be done by the teacher or the student independently or in collaboration.

Performance Assessment Assessment that is based on students demonstrating what they can do. The term is sometimes used to describe assessment using performance tasks. More generally, it is used to describe approaches to assessment which value process as well as product.

Portfolio A purposeful collection of student work that shows the student's effort, progress, or achievement over time.

Portfolio Assessment Portfolio Assessment is a method of gathering student work samples for the purpose of evaluating student knowledge and learning.

Reporting The presentation of information gained through evaluation based on identified standards. Reporting may be done in writing, through a scheduled conference, or informally.

Self-Assessment / Self-Evaluation The ongoing process in which students get to know themselves as learners by reflecting on their own performance, products, thinking, and learning.

Student-Centred Conference A meeting of teacher, parent(s) and student to discuss the student's learning.

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