

Introduction

The richness of the portfolio as a valuable assessment tool in schooling has become evident to educators throughout the world. As academic portfolios have been introduced, implemented and modified in classrooms, they have been defined and redefined as a container of evidence about and for student achievement. Increasingly, they are viewed as a platform or scaffolding for analysis, reflection and – most important – conversation about students’ work. Few educators would dismiss the power of portfolios to produce compelling evidence of student achievement and learning dispositions. But the reality is that implementing an effective portfolio system is very complex, and can be time consuming for many, especially at the outset.

This book will address the importance of portfolios and e-portfolios in the academic life of students and teachers. It will provide the reader with an understanding of the various definitions of print and e-portfolios, and it will promote understanding of the location of portfolios at the intersection of student evaluation and assessment. Each chapter will provide a number of strategies and tools for effectively involving the stakeholders of assessment – students, parents, teachers and administrators – and will illustrate the ways in which portfolio assessment can inform policymakers about significant student achievement. This edition of *The Portfolio Connection* will specifically focus on how the portfolio process can result in increased student voice, self-reflection, goal setting and academic motivation. Each chapter will integrate perspectives and points for teachers to consider as they create a portfolio process that involves students and celebrates their learning accomplishments.

Academic portfolios have been defined in numerous ways. Most commonly, they are regarded as containers or “compendiums” of specifically selected student work that meets the stated purposes of the assessment process – notably, student work representing a selection of performances. Hebert (1998) describes her school’s experience with portfolios as one of discovery in which students, faculty and parents recognise that “the real contents of a portfolio are the child’s thoughts and his or her reasons for selecting a particular entry. That selection process reflects the interests and metacognitive maturity of the child and the inspiration and influence offered by the teachers” (p. 583). Some educators assert that portfolios promote “evidence *and* dialogue to identify where pupils are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (Black & William, 2004, p. 7; emphasis in original). Black and William believe that portfolios work best when they are seen as a principal means of assessing *for* learn-

Self-Assessment – The Power of Reflection

The genuine power of the portfolio emerges when students analyse and describe the work they include, discuss the key concepts they have learned and, most important, reflect on how this learning has affected them. A portfolio is really a multisensory and multidimensional personification of a student's entire learning process and learning dispositions. Without the engagement of students in self-reflection, self-assessment and evaluation of their work against known standards, the emergence of student voice is limited. If students merely collect and store work in a paper or electronic folder, the effectiveness of using the work as evidence of achievement is minimised. It is the critical element of reflection that fosters the higher-order critical thinking and decision-making skills necessary for continuous learning and improvement. *Self-assessment* describes the entire process by which students develop judgments and perception of *what* has been learned. While self-assessing, students analyse products and the outcomes of performances and compare them to the known standards or criteria, or both. The student, like the artist, will use a palette of media and processes that showcase his or her individuality, achievement and uniqueness (Figure 0.4).

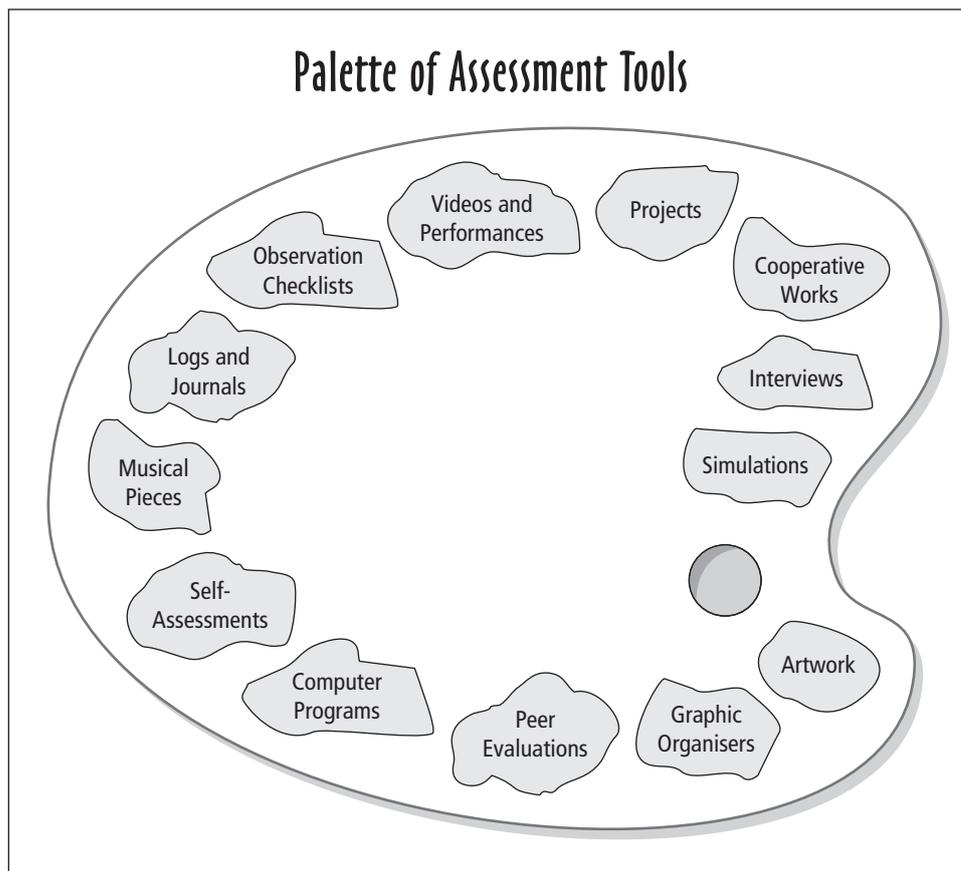


Figure 0.4

Figure 0.5 illustrates the variety of performance and product assessments that a student would likely include in the portfolio or e-portfolio. The *self-evaluation* promoted by the portfolio process engages students in acquiring an understanding of *how* they are learning, as opposed to *what* they are learning. It is the means for the students to make significant strides in understanding themselves as learners.

encouraging students to take charge of their learning. . . . If carefully assembled, portfolios become an intersection of instruction and assessment; they are not *just* instruction or *just* assessment, but, rather, both. Together, instruction and assessment give more than either give separately” (p. 61; emphasis in original).

WHY USE PORTFOLIOS?

Portfolios provide information about a student that traditional paper-and-pencil tests cannot. They present a demonstration of the student’s academic skills and learning dispositions that helps teachers, students and parents make informal decisions about instruction. Portfolios and e-portfolios have been especially helpful in representing the achievement and progress of students with special needs. These data are used to hold schools, teachers and students accountable. (See Figure 1.1 for reasons that support use of portfolios.) Yet dependence on testing alone can lead to curriculum and instruction bereft of meaningfulness or dimension. Educators who strive to learn about all their students and who promote success for each of them have turned to portfolios and e-portfolios as tools that bring the disparate elements of curriculum together in a satisfying manner for all concerned.

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

Carr and Harris (2001) describe an academic portfolio as a “purposeful, integrated collection of student work showing effort, progress or achievement in one or more areas . . . Assessment is enhanced when students select the items for their portfolios, [their] self-reflection is encouraged, and criteria for success are clear” (p. 181). For this reason, portfolios are among the most frequently mentioned tools for promoting student voice. When committed to using portfolio systems, the use of authentic assessment in the classroom becomes as important as testing. In her book *Power of Portfolios*, Hebert (2001) refers to portfolios as “modern memory boxes” (p. x). While portfolios can and do become important collections of key “artefacts” that remind students of their growth over time and of their accomplishment of learning standards, they also provide a deep, rich anthology of learning evidence.

WHAT IS AN E-PORTFOLIO?

As technology and telecommunication tools have been acquired in primary and secondary schools, the e-portfolio has proven to be a powerful vehicle for promoting both student engagement and voice in the learning process. Batson (2002) describes the e-portfolio as a collection of student work that brings together three trends: the electronic form of much student work, especially at the upper-primary or secondary levels; the availability of the Internet, where students can both access and produce information; and accessibility of databases that allow students to manage large volumes of their work. The e-portfolio offers a multimedia dimension to the portfolio that “allows the creator to present learning and reflective artefacts in a variety of media formats (audio, graphics, video and text)” (Montgomery & Wiley, 2004, p. 5). In a recent call for papers,

Multiple Intelligence Portfolio: Space

Standards:

1. Use reading, writing, listening and speaking skills to research and apply information for specific purposes.
2. Understand the facts and unifying concepts of earth/space sciences.
3. Identify and explain ways that science and technology influence the direction of people's lives.

<i>Verbal/Linguistic</i>	<i>Logical/Mathematical</i>	<i>Visual/Spatial</i>	<i>Bodily/Kinesthetic</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a list of vocabulary words for space. • Write a joke book for space creatures. • Write a short story set on a planet. • Keep a diary about a trip you took in space. • Research a planet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graph the distances of planets from the sun or other planets. • Calculate the length of a trip to the moon travelling at 100 kilometres per hour. • Classify planets by temperature and size. • Calculate the cost of fuel needed to reach the moon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a picture of what you think a Martian looks like. • Make a model of the solar system. • Make a clay sculpture of a planet. • Create a Venn diagram comparing Earth and Mars. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act out the astronauts' first steps on the moon. • Simulate the sun or the orbits of all the planets. • Create a sport that would be popular in space (with no gravity). • Demonstrate gravity in an experiment.
<i>Musical/Rhythmic</i>	<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Intrapersonal</i>	<i>Naturalist</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a planetary anthem for one of the planets. • Write a rap song for one of the planets. • Create a new dance named <i>Space Walk</i>. • Write poetry to the music from <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview ET about his trip to Earth. • Role-play the parts of each member of a space crew. • Plan a joint space expedition with another country. • Practise peer mediation with an alien. • Give a speech persuading others to explore space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditate on being the first person to walk on the moon. • Describe how it would feel to be the first student in space. • Tell how you would feel if you did not see sunlight for a long time. • Write a letter to an astronaut. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classify plants found in space. • Identify rock samples found on planets. • Forecast the weather for a planet. • Plan a nature week on a planet. • Create a survival guide for life on Mars.

Standards Pieces	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4
	<i>Research report on planet</i>	<i>Speech on space exploration</i>	<i>Survival guide</i>	<i>Gravity experiment</i>
Student's Choice	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8

Example 1.2

Portfolio Planner 1

Getting Started

Purpose

What is the *principal* purpose for using an academic portfolio?

What is a *secondary* purpose for using an academic portfolio?

Type

What type(s) of portfolios will help fulfil the purpose? Explain why.

Audience

Who will be the audience of the portfolio?

Format

Will this be a paper portfolio or electronic portfolio (e-portfolio)?

Paper E-portfolio

Blackline 1.1

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