

What is a Portfolio Assessment

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas of the curriculum. The collection must include the following:

- Student participation in selecting contents.
- Criteria for selection.
- Criteria for judging merits.
- Evidence of a student's self-reflection.

It should represent a collection of students' best work or best efforts, student-selected samples of work experiences related to outcomes being assessed, and documents according growth and development toward mastering identified outcomes.

Why Use a Portfolio?

In this new era of performance assessment related to the monitoring of students' mastery of a core curriculum, portfolios can enhance the assessment process by revealing a range of skills and understandings one students' parts; support instructional goals; reflect change and growth over a period of time; encourage student, teacher, and parent reflection; and provide for continuity in education from one year to the next. Instructors can use them for a variety of specific purposes, including:

- Encouraging self-directed learning.
- Enlarging the view of what is learned.
- Fostering learning about learning.
- Demonstrating progress toward identified outcomes.
- Creating an intersection for instruction and assessment.
- Providing a way for students to value themselves as learners.
- Offering opportunities for peer-supported growth.

What are the characteristics of an effective portfolio

Portfolio assessment is a multi-faceted process characterized by the following recurrent qualities:

- It is continuous and ongoing, providing both formative (i.e., ongoing) and summative (i.e., culminating) opportunities for monitoring students' progress toward achieving essential outcomes.
- It is multidimensional, i.e., reflecting a wide variety of artifacts and processes reflecting various aspects of students' learning process(es).
- It provides for collaborative reflection, including ways for students to reflect about their own thinking processes and metacognitive introspection as they monitor their own comprehension, reflect upon their approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, and observe their emerging understanding of subjects and skills.

Although approaches to portfolio development may vary, all of the major research and literature on portfolios reinforce the following characteristics:

- They clearly reflect stated learner outcomes identified in the core or essential curriculum that students are expected to study.
- They focus upon students' performance-based learning experiences as well as their acquisition of key knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- They contain samples of work that stretch over an entire marking period, rather than single points in time.
- They contain works that represent a variety of different assessment tools.
- They contain a variety of work samples and evaluations of that work by the student, peers, and teachers, possible even parents' reactions.

Source: Paul S. George, (1995). What Is Portfolio Assessment Really and How Can I Use It in My Classroom? Gainesville, FL: Teacher Education Resources.

What are Some of the Different Types of Portfolios

There are many different types of portfolios, each of which can serve one or more specific purposes as part of an overall school or classroom assessment program. The following is a list of the types most often cited in the literature:

- **Documentation Portfolio:** This type is also known as the "working" portfolio. Specifically, this approach involves a collection of work over time showing growth and improvement reflecting students' learning of identified outcomes. The documentation portfolio can include everything from brainstorming activities to drafts to finished products. The collection becomes meaningful when specific items are selected out to focus on particular educational experiences or goals. It can include the best and weakest of student work.
- **Process Portfolio:** This approach documents all facets or phases of the learning process. They are particularly useful in documenting students' overall learning process. It can show how students integrate specific knowledge or skills and progress towards both basic and advanced mastery. Additionally, the process portfolio inevitably emphasizes students' reflection upon their learning process, including the use of reflective journals, think logs, and related forms of metacognitive processing.
- **Showcase Portfolio:** This type of portfolio is best used for summative evaluation of students' mastery of key curriculum outcomes. It should include students' very best work, determined through a combination of student and teacher selection. Only completed work should be included. In addition, this type of portfolio is especially compatible with audio-visual artifact development, including photographs, videotapes, and electronic records of students' completed work. The showcase portfolio should also include written analysis and reflections by the student upon the decision-making process(es) used to determine which works are included.