Teacher perceptions on student portfolio assessment and implementation

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This study investigated the perceptions of teachers on portfolio development, implementation, and assessment for all students, specifically for students with disabilities. An interview was conducted individually with ten teachers working in diverse educational settings in southern Wisconsin.

A short survey gathered data on teacher demographics including gender, teaching experience, portfolio experience, and education. The interview protocol organized the questions into five sections: (1) Teacher Knowledge of Portfolios, (2) Developing and Implementing Portfolios, (3) Effectiveness as an Educational Tool and Influence on Instructional Practices, (4) Portfolio Legitimacy as an Alternative Assessment, (5) Student Roles and Responsibilities of Developing Portfolios.

The results showed that teachers were knowledgeable of portfolios. The majority of teachers reported they liked teaching with portfolios, perceived their benefits to student learning and assessment, and students enjoyed working with their portfolios. Meanwhile, they raised concerns about the amount of time they spent to prepare portfolios and the accurate grading in portfolio evaluations.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Providing effective instruction for students with disabilities relies on tangible evidence of a student’s current level of mastery (Bos & Vaughn, 2002). Assessments are used to evaluate appropriate evidence of a student’s performance, and his/her academic mastery level. Standardized tests are provided to evaluate student learning performance; however, so often this kind of testing fails to accurately reflect the student’s abilities, especially those with special needs (Jensen & Klonicke, 1999).

According to Kim (2004), students with disabilities have historically been excluded from educational assessment and accountability systems. Current laws mandate that all children unable to participate in the general assessment, even with accommodations, should be included in assessment systems. For example, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) mandates schools to measure student knowledge through assessments at least once a year in grades 3-8, and at least once in high school. It holds schools and school districts accountable for results, making sure every child is learning. The amendments of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997 (IDEA, 1997) have created intensive interest in developing alternate assessments for students with disabilities who are not able to participate in large scale assessment programs (Olsen et al. 1998).
Concerns of standardized tests are raised, and questions, such as "What's your alternative?" are asked. Parents and community members have the right to know how well their children are learning. Educators and parents also need to learn about and promote alternatives to high stakes testing (Peterson & Neill, 1999). As individual states and school districts design and implement assessment programs and policies, it is important to include teachers as an integral part of the critique and refinement process (Kampfer, Horvath, Kleinert, & Kearns, 2001).

Alternate assessments serve as a substitute method to gather data by means of portfolios or other performance measures. The purpose of alternate assessments is to measure a student's progress and achievement when he/she is unable to participate in the regular assessment because of his/her disabilities (Salvia, Ysseldyke, & Bolt, 2007). A portfolio assessment is considered as one of the alternatives. A portfolio addresses the question 'who am I' and presents a coherent story of the student as a learner. It is an integrated collection of a student's work to exhibit his/her effort, progress, and achievement in one or more areas. The portfolio collection must include evidence of student participation in class activities, learning goals and objectives, curricular standards, and context performance, presenting what is learned and why it is important (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1992).

Portfolios represent a philosophy to integrate assessment into instruction. A student portfolio is a collection of the student's work gathered over time in a purposeful manner, indicating current and past performance levels, to help the teacher gain an insight into the student as a learner. Thus, the portfolio assessment has gained in
popularity to provide a way for improving the quality of classroom instruction and serve as an alternative to standardized large-scale testing (Wolfe, Chiu, & Reckase, 1999).

**Statement of the Problem**

Accurately assessing students with disabilities is an essential component to promoting student success (Bos & Vaughn, 2002). Without accurate assessment results, teachers may have difficulty providing appropriate instruction for a student.

Student assessment should identify a student’s knowledge, strengths, weaknesses, and current level of cognitive and functioning ability, thereby allowing teachers to better accommodate and meet the student’s special needs. Existing standardized assessments of educational achievement are insufficiently sensitive to the diversity of student populations. For example, a student who has difficulty achieving prevailing standards is generally considered to be a problem of the individual and not a problem of appropriateness of the assessment instrument or practices used (Gordon, 1995). Another concern is that multicultural and gender considerations have raised the issue of a bias in those standardized tests (Cheek, 1992). Teachers are concerned about this one shot as an assessment to evaluate student performance because students with disabilities usually earn lower scores on standardized tests than those without disabilities (Swartz, 1999).

Administrators in the past often excluded students with disabilities from the assessment process to avoid these students’ low scores impacting the school’s score report. Following the requirement of the amendments of IDEA in 1997, the need to include students with disabilities in the educational reform and accountability system became evident (Kleinert & Thurlow, 2001). It is required by the law to develop
alternative forms of assessment to accurately assess students with disabilities who are not able to participate in the standardized tests (Kim, 2004).

Portfolios serving as an assessment tool are gaining in popularity for students with disabilities, because standardized tests often fail to reflect a true picture of the student. Many educators find the portfolio assessment to be an accurate indicator of student progress. However, unlike conventional assessments which take away teachers’ instructional time, portfolios supplement the learning process (Gibbs, 2004). Proponents of the portfolio believe it is effective for assessing student achievement and helps the student to understand the learning process at all ability levels. Excerpts of student reflections include comments such as; “In the pages that follow you will find the work that I feel represents my strengths.” and “I have included expository, informative, and creative pieces which represent skills that I have found to enhance the quality of my writing.” Other comments were also presented by a student, such as “I have learned word choice is very important.” and “At the beginning of the year I havit [haven’t] been yoosing [using] periods and I am now. At the beginning of the year I havit [haven’t] been yoosing [using] elaboration and I am now.” (Paulson et al., 1991, p.62).

Including the student in portfolio assessment is often part of the process used. As part of the portfolio assessment team, the student shares the responsibility of grading his/her own work. The student must support a grade he/she gives, which helps to develop his/her decision-making and justification skills. Teachers also found involving students in assessing their work improves the students’ skill in setting personal goals and helps them become more self-directed (Mondock, 1997). Some teachers have adapted the grading system in portfolios to include more than one grade. For example, a system implemented
by a teacher uses two kinds of grades. One is a “portfolio grade” which reflects and rewards students for risk-taking, revision, development, and organization on all papers in the portfolio. A second “paper grade” is assigned to individual work and reflects the outcome of one final product. The two grades are weighted based on the students’ level with the emphasis placed on the purpose of the portfolio. This technique allowed successful application of portfolios with all grade levels and students with different abilities (Krest, 1990). It has been recognized that students with disabilities are not successful in taking traditional paper and pencil tests, and portfolios serve as a means to supplement curriculum and as an alternative to regular assessments (Sweet, 1993).

Some concerns were raised about the use of portfolios because it is time consuming, with a lack of uniformity in content, purpose, implementation, and assessment rubrics. Time was a major concern and barrier of teachers’ positive attitude toward portfolio implementation. Obtaining portfolio knowledge, effective portfolio development and organization, teaching students how to use a portfolio, creating rubrics, evaluating and grading were all time consuming issues raised by teachers (e.g. Kim, 2004; Poel, 1998; Swartz, 1999; Tierney, Clark, et al., 1998).

An important characteristic of portfolios is allowing students to select some of the pieces. While this component may help the student develop a better understanding of the learning process, it also contributes to the inconsistency of portfolio contents (Shaklee, Barbour, Ambrose, & Hansford, 1997). Comparing six states that use portfolio assessment as an alternative to standardized tests, only one content area, work samples, was uniformly used by all six states (Warlick & Olsen, 1999). If portfolio goals and criteria are not clear, the purpose of the portfolio can be lost, leaving a miscellaneous
collection of artifacts that do not show patterns of growth or achievement (Maurer, 1996). This inconsistency is a problem for using the portfolio assessment as an alternative to replace standardized tests. However, if the portfolio assessment adopts specific structural and content requirements to make it more suitable to evaluation and accountability, it may not reflect the students’ skills accurately (Warlick & Olsen). Most teachers adopt portfolios as an alternate assessment to meet their students’ needs. These highly individualized portfolios make assessing items such as learning outcomes and accomplishments an intensely personal judgment. This may cause a problem on scoring validity and reliability. Thus, it is necessary to establish standards to evaluate portfolios, and other evaluation indicators must be developed to provide a guide for scoring systems (Sweet, 1993). Like any other form of qualitative data, pieces included in a portfolio can be difficult to analyze and grade (Shaklee et al. 1997).

Research on teacher perceptions include topics such as mainstreaming students with special needs, relationships between teachers and assistants, attitudes of effective teachers, standardized testing, accountability, and alternate assessment. Research on the use of the student portfolio as a means to both teach and assess students often includes teachers’ perceptions of this alternative assessment tool. For example, teachers reported their level of knowledge and comfort about teaching through writing increased as they collaborated with peers over the portfolios (Berryman & Russell, 2001). Teachers in the research by Chan (2000) indicated that they had strong opinions about the uniqueness of individual students and the criteria to be used for assessment. The study by Kim (2004), focused on teacher perspectives regarding benefits to special education teachers and their students using portfolios and suggestions on improving the IAA (Illinois Alternative
Assessment) program. Swartz (1999) explored the question “What are the teacher’s beliefs and assumptions about implementation of portfolios?” Research looking for a correlation between teacher beliefs and knowledge of portfolios found that pride and student ownership were characteristics in each assessment system used by the teachers who perceived portfolios as being an effective alternate assessment (Swartz).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers’ perceptions regarding portfolio assessment of students with learning disabilities. In the past, research has focused on portfolios as an authentic form of assessment, a teaching tool, basic portfolio styles, content variety, and supplement to standardized tests. There are limited studies on current professional expectations, attitudes, and concerns on the implementation of the portfolio assessment, especially teachers’ perceptions since the portfolio gained in popularity as an alternate assessment in the 1990’s. This study provided further research based on the findings of Kim (2004), Poel (1998), and Swartz (1999), by interviewing teachers to investigate their perceptions on the portfolio assessment and its implementation.

Research Question

The following question guided this study:

What are teacher’s perceptions on the portfolio assessment regarding teacher’s knowledge of student portfolios, development and implementation, effectiveness as an educational tool influencing instructional practices, legitimacy as an alternative assessment, and student’s roles and responsibilities of developing portfolios?
CHAPTER TWO
LITERARY REVIEW

In this chapter, relevant literature is reviewed and organized according to: (a) types of portfolios and contents; (b) portfolio evolution into classrooms; (c) teachers’ view of their knowledge of student portfolios; (d) teacher perceptions of portfolio development, implementation, and its effectiveness as an educational tool (e) teacher perceptions of the legitimacy of portfolio assessments; and (f) student roles and responsibilities in developing portfolios.

Types of Portfolios and Contents

According to Barrett and Wilkerson (2004), Beattie (1994), Pole (1998), Salend (1998), Seely (1994), and Wilcox (1997), there are several types of portfolios. These include: (a) showcase portfolio; (b) cumulative portfolio; (c) documentation portfolio; (d) goal-based portfolio; (e) process portfolio; (f) active portfolio; (g) reflective portfolio; (h) passive portfolio; (i) evaluation portfolio; (j) electronic portfolio / ePortfolio; and (k) mini-portfolio.

While some portfolios vary greatly in content and purpose, others are similar in characteristics. The showcase portfolio exclusively contains examples of a student’s best work (Poel, 1998; Salend, 1998; Seeley, 1994). The cumulative portfolio contains a collection of items gathered over an extended period of time, with each item analyzed to verify the changes in the products and process associated with student learning (Salend). The documentation portfolio documents a student’s steps and progress over time (Seeley).
The goal-based portfolio demonstrates student progress toward specific goals, such as those listed in the student’s IEPs (Salend). The process portfolio shows the steps and course of action the student used for each portfolio item (Seeley; Poel). The active portfolio is similar to the process portfolio, containing diverse artifacts that are assessed in a variety of ways by different evaluators. The reflective portfolio emphasizes the reflections of students, teachers, and parents on the learning process (Salend). A passive portfolio is similar to a reflective portfolio containing samples of student work (Wilcox, 1997). The evaluation portfolio focuses on predetermined tasks proposed by the state or local districts (Poel). Electronic portfolios, also known as ePortfolios, have grown in popularity and can adapt to meet the requirements of paper portfolios while incorporating the use of technology (Barrett & Wilkerson, 2004). The mini portfolio is primarily used by students to exhibit their art work, along with an explanation of the conceptually developmental process of the piece (Beattie, 1994). The active, process, and goal-based portfolios can generate new ideas and promote academic growth as the student and teacher work on the portfolio items (Wilcox, 1997). Passive, showcase, and reflective portfolios cannot be changed. Thus, its creator, the student, may not learn new information from the portfolio entries (Wilcox).

As portfolios emerged as an alternate assessment, two general categories materialize: product portfolio and process portfolio (Mondock, 1997). The product portfolio is a collection of finished pieces created by the student. Its focus is to show the students’ best work. The evidence supporting student growth in a product portfolio is limited. The process portfolio uses multiple portfolio pieces to track student development, as evidence of growth, emphasizing the process through reflections, self-
evaluations, and conferences with the teacher and peers (Mondock). A slight variation of the process portfolio is the evaluation portfolio (Mueller, 2006). It is specifically designed for evaluation purposes to document progress towards standards, to give grades, or for student placement (Mueller). Selecting the right portfolio style to meet the needs of the student, an educator is an essential component for successful portfolio assessment (Dougan, 1996). It is necessary for the educator and student to decide on the goals of the portfolio before they can determine which is the most suitable. The educator must also determine what limitations may be placed on their choices because of the student’s age and ability (Salend, 1998).

Portfolios are presented in repositories of various shapes and sizes (Poel, 1998). There is no definitive requirement for the container holding the portfolio contents. Popular types are three ring binders and file folders, but others include accordion-type folders, cardboard-like briefcases, or CD disks (Poel). More unique portfolios are presented in objects such as pizza boxes, scrap books, cubbyhole shelves, or books that have been cut, glued, painted and otherwise modified to house the portfolio’s finished products (DeFina, 1992; Jasmine, 1995). Selecting the most appropriate method to preserve and display the portfolio often depends on the portfolio’s content and individual preference (DeFina). For young elementary students, holding large pictures or writing samples in a decorated pizza box with the content index glued to the inside cover may be a better choice than binding the irregular sized pages. A teacher may also consider folding samples or reducing a large product with a photocopier for easier storage (Jasmine). A portfolio that contains a large volume of different academic subjects may be better suited in an accordion style folder or hanging file folder, sectioned by subject areas.
Portfolio Evolution into Classrooms

Assessment has a long history in all cultures, usually with a focus on the current needs of the society (Gipps, 1999). For many years, students throughout the United States have taken a battery of standardized tests each spring, assessing their knowledge and abilities, with their cumulative scores providing a depiction of the effectiveness of their educational programs (Furger, 2005). The results of standardized tests are valuable in providing data to compare children and school districts in similar testing situations (Poel, 1998). Community members may review the test scores to determine if schools are providing equal opportunities to all students; and policy makers examine the scores to evaluate the effectiveness of various programs (Peterson & Neill, 1999). School districts may also use the assessment scores for curriculum modification to improve their education plan (Peterson & Neill).

An educational reform movement in the 1980s has made major changes in educational accountability and evaluations of academic performance (Kim, 2004). This accountability system requires that all students be included in assessments. Alternate formats can be used if a student is not able to participate in the state-wide standardized testing. States began developing policies related to alternate assessment standards and approaches. The approaches identified in the survey by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) were: (a) direct observations of the student or by video, (b) a student portfolio, (c) performance assessment, (d) surveys, (e) progress review, (f) a current state-wide assessment with adaptations, and (g) an adaptive behavior scale.
The common understanding of educators is that a single test score or measure is not always an accurate depiction of a student’s learning outcome (Swartz, 1999). This perception has led many educators to go beyond traditional tests and implement alternate assessments to gain a better evaluation of a student’s performance and ability (Furger, 2005). Students are able to demonstrate what they know and what they can do by completing projects such as designing a school building or improving the water supply in a pond (Furger). Other skill demonstrations include responding to simulations, giving presentations and performances, and designing experiments (Salend, 1998). Some students record their real world activities and document their work and findings in a portfolio (Swartz). The first student portfolio used in classrooms was a writing portfolio (Pierce & O’Malley, 1992). Over time, the writing portfolio was modified and adapted to accommodate different students’ ability levels in all subjects. Integrating portfolio assessment into classrooms is a good way to merge classroom assessment with large-scale testing (Wolfe et al., 1999). The difficulty is overcoming challenges such as changes in educational curricula, teacher instruction, and assessment strategies (Wolfe et al.). This outlook on assessment led to a change of focus in education from what is taught to what is learned. This emphasis indicates that evaluations of educational outcomes should be focused on students rather than the teacher (Swartz). This focus on the students has shifted educators’ emphasis from evaluating or assessing student outcomes or products to the processes of learning (Mueller, 2006). Schools must teach more than the basic skills, students must be able to think critically and creatively to solve problems (Kaiser, 2000).
The concept of measuring individual growth allows portfolios to become a popular alternate assessment for students with disabilities (Poel, 1998). The portfolio assessment also allows teachers to view and evaluate many different facets of the learner and make informed decisions related to academics, educational programs, interventions, referrals, and placements. Also, for special education students the portfolio has the potential to support their IEPs (Poel). Creating a portfolio for students with disabilities is an alternative method for educators to evaluate and assess a learner’s progress, strengths and weaknesses, and provide tangible evidence of his/her ability (Kim, 2004). Poel’s study concurs with Kim’s evaluation to support portfolio measurements on a student’s potential and performance. Utilizing the information from evaluations, observations, and anecdotal records, IEP team members can determine realistic goals and objectives (Poel). The portfolio process provides an environment and assessment that can be combined with standardized test scores to provide a broader, more accurate account of the learner’s abilities and growth (Poel).

Assessment portfolios can be designed to complement standardized tests in assessing students in special education and provide additional information to show a student’s progress over time and to present his/her strengths and weaknesses (Chan, 2000). In traditional educational systems, students are rarely asked to examine how they succeeded, failed, and improved on a task, or to set future goals. Portfolios provide a format for student reflections on this information (Mueller, 2006). Teachers believe individual student growth should be measured, rather than comparing one student to another, and a single test score is viewed as a less reliable measure of learning than tasks and activities a student completes over time (Swartz, 1999). A portfolio can adapt and
evolve, as needed, to allow for individual growth and reflection based on individual needs and differences. It also allows for the uniqueness of each student to be reflected in his/her work and personal evaluations (Jensen & Klonicke, 1999).

There are a multitude of definitions of portfolio assessments. Many of them have similar concepts with a slightly different language to elaborate. Some definitions are unique. For example, “Portfolio Assessment can be defined as a purposeful multifaceted process of collecting documentation of children’s growth, progress, and effort over time with specific pre-determined criteria” (Hanson & Gilkerson, 1999, p. 81). “Portfolios provide an excellent vehicle for consideration of process and the development of related skills. They move away from telling a student’s story through test scores and, instead, focus on a meaningful collection of student performance and meaningful reflection and evaluation of that work” (Mueller, 2006, p. 2).

Spandel and Culham (as cited in Swartz, 1999), summarize the reasons for teachers to use portfolios as follows: (a) to show what the student can do; (b) to help students discover who they are as learners; (c) to provide tangible evidence of a student’s abilities, such as thinking, planning, using information, and working in groups; (d) to preserve student work; (e) to create a visual history of a student’s growth; and (f) to empower the student as a manager and self-evaluator of his/her work.

Teacher’s Knowledge of Student Portfolios

In order to successfully implement portfolios in a classroom, teachers must have a strong focus, desire and determination, flexibility, ability to teach skills in small chunks, with good classroom management and strong organizational skills. (Jensen & Klonicke, 1999; Swartz, 1999; Wolfe et al., 1999). These organizational skills include knowing
where portfolios will be stored, when students will have access, and what the portfolio goals, objectives, and specific content will be. Good classroom management is a necessity in creating a positive learning environment. Being able to break concepts into small pieces helps prevent overwhelming students (Swartz). Portfolios are easy to adapt to meet the needs of individual students. As students bring their own background knowledge and experiences to the portfolio process, flexibility is necessary to help them select meaningful pieces to include in their portfolios (Seely, 1994). Desire and determination are paramount for teachers to overcome obstacles such as time constraints and possible limitations due to student age or ability. Teachers are facing challenges to select the best portfolio to meet the goal of the student and teacher, training students, and adapting teaching to include the portfolio content (Sweet, 1993). One of the teacher participants in Swartz’s study (1999) indicated that a strong desire and determination were important to prevent educators from implementing portfolios and giving up as complications arose during the development. Maintaining goals and objectives as decisions are made during the planning and implementation is another essential quality necessary for teachers (Jensen & Klonicke, 1999).

While some teachers felt very knowledgeable about portfolios, most felt the need to know more (Swartz, 1999). One teacher said, “I wish I knew more. I am doing this by the seat of my pants. I haven’t really had any training” (p. 38). Teachers involved in the Kentucky portfolio assessment were concerned that implementing portfolios with all students would consume too much of their instructional time; and they were uncertain how they would meet all the curriculum requirements (Kampfer et al., 2001).
To increase their knowledge, many teachers reviewed professional journals, attended workshops, or talked with co-workers (Swartz, 1999; Wolfe et al., 2000). After trainings or workshops teachers had mixed feelings about the portfolio process (Manning, Crossen, & Anderson, 2000). Many participants obtained new ideas and personal resolutions from the meetings (Sawyer, 1998). For example, teachers in Massachusetts not only met for training sessions but had additional back up support at their school sites (Sawyer). One teacher indicated that these meetings were “a necessary breather” to help focus and reflect on portfolio research. The classroom visits to teachers and students by university staff were an important factor in supporting the portfolio development (Sawyer). The teachers that participated in Berryman and Russell’s study (2001) advocated for group discussion to increase their knowledge and comfort level for teaching students using portfolio writing. Because of training, some of the teachers became very knowledgeable and comfortable using portfolio assessment (Wolfe et al.), while others raised concerns or confusion over the criteria for selecting the most appropriate type of portfolio, the procedure, or organization (Manning et al.). Approximately half the teachers in the training were unsure if they believed portfolios would be useful for documenting student progress (Manning et al.) The demands from the federal government, state, school districts, principals, parents, and other professionals add stress to teachers. It seemed that using portfolios met the requirements of school administrators, but teachers wanted the portfolio’s focus on quality over quantity (Swartz).

Teachers in Sawyer’s study (1998) took part in a research project sponsored by the University of New York to explore the use of portfolios to assess literature learning.
These teachers worked in collaboration with the University faculty to develop research questions and portfolio systems. Support was provided to teachers at the scheduled project meetings where the entire research team gathered and individually shared with teachers in school. The positive atmosphere and support allowed teachers to successfully implement portfolios as a means of teaching and assessing students.

**Portfolio Development, Implementation, and Effectiveness as an Educational Tool**

Teachers in research studies by Swartz (1999) and Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991), stressed the importance of the educational climate in the classroom. They indicated a safe classroom climate where students felt free to take risks and share their ideas, is important for students to develop their own portfolios.

In Hall and Hewitt-Gervais’s study (2000), teachers were surveyed regarding their perceptions of developing portfolios. The results showed that most teachers perceived the value of portfolios for enhancing communication, showing student growth over time, and promoting students’ motivation and efforts. This was evidenced by some teacher’s statements: “There are not many moments more fulfilling than when a student reflects on her own work and is amazed to see how much she has learned” (Tierney, Clark, et al., 1998, p. 477). “Portfolios are a simple yet powerful idea. Students save their writings, revisit their work and reflect upon it” (Dudley, 2001, p. 19). Students, who are proud of well written pieces and are able to note the shortcomings of less satisfactory work, benefit from working with portfolios more than their peers who are not successful with the process.

According to Kim (2004), young children or students with severe disabilities can be included in the portfolio assessment by modifying the criteria and content. Portfolio
assessments can include documenting student progress in areas such as self-care, language development, gross and fine motor, problem solving, and social skills.

Since 1992, all students in Kentucky have been included in the state assessment system. An alternate portfolio assessment with assistive technology is used to support students when necessary. Denham and Lahm (2001) detail a variety of technological devices employed by the state to accommodate students. Portfolios are tailored to each student to meet his or her IEP goals. Students use computers to complete activities targeting individual objectives. To simplify the traditional computer keyboard, an adaptive keyboard with custom overlays is designed for each student. The student’s cognitive ability determines the complexity of the overlay. Students are paired with general education peers to offer support while working on the computer. Both general and special education students are trained to use the keyboard overlay. The peer to peer interaction helps build student relationships. This Kentucky practice might lay the groundwork for many other states in their efforts to implement portfolio assessments.

A major flaw in the Kentucky portfolio assessment system was to implement a huge change in teaching and assessment strategies without extensive teacher training (Berryman & Russell, 2001). As educators began reviewing their portfolio practice and making adjustments with adequate training, portfolio implementation was improved. It took a few years for teachers to discover the positive aspects of portfolio practice for teaching and learning. It took even longer to revise the system for teachers to work collaboratively in the portfolio process (Berryman & Russell).
Teachers indicated some concerns about implementing portfolios in the classroom, such as the time and effort required to develop, implement, and assess portfolios (Kim, 2004). Whenever implementing a new procedure, especially one as complex as student portfolios, mixed emotions can be expected from both staff and students until everyone involved is educated (Peterson & Neill, 1999). Implementing student portfolios requires teachers provide instruction and guidance, while students learn the portfolio process (Bennett, 2003). Training students is very time consuming, and teachers may need to change or adapt the procedure to accommodate all students or class schedules (Juniewicz, 2003). For example, in middle schools, the sheer number of students and class transitions make portfolio development an extremely difficult task for students and teachers (Juniewicz). Making portfolios manageable for teachers who are teaching multiple sessions is a major concern for educators (Roemer, Schultz, & Durst, 1991).

Another complication in implementing portfolios is that there is no perfect portfolio plan; so much of the process is based on trial and error (Bennett, 2003). There is not one correct portfolio or way to design and model portfolio development. The key for a successful portfolio is for each classroom, school district, or state to create an approach that meets the needs of their portfolio’s purpose (Pierce & O’Malley, 1992).

Time consuming is evidenced by teachers in research. Participants in Swartz’s study (1999) were in agreement on several barriers of portfolio use, time was the major concern. Further, Kim (2004) listed five independent studies that specified some aspect of time as a concern in portfolio assessment. The consensus from the different studies (e.g. Dudley, 2001; Kim, 2004; Swartz, 1999; Tienery, Carter, et al., 1991) was concern about
the same issue for both teachers and students. To sufficiently train professionals in the
different aspects of portfolio assessments requires not only effort but adequate time. For example, 60% of the general education teachers from 4th through 8th grade in Vermont indicated insufficient time to teach and work with student portfolios (Kampfer et al., 2001). The amount of time required to select an appropriate portfolio and develop its contents based on teacher and student goals and objectives, was also regarded as a time consuming undertaking. Another concern was time and complexity to grade or evaluate portfolios. The time to adequately train and meet students was an additional concern raised by teachers in the various studies. It also takes time for students to produce meaningful work, and teachers must provide an opportunity for students to have this time (Tienery, Carter et al.). It is important to provide time for students to think about and to generate meaningful work, to share their thoughts and writings, and to work collaboratively with their peers (Tienery, Carter et al.).

Grading is also complex and time consuming for teachers. Simply creating the rubric to evaluate portfolios could be a daunting chore (Dudley, 2001). Carrying home crates of portfolios and spending the weekend to evaluate and grade makes additional work for teachers. As commented in Dudley’s study, a teacher could give a D or an F to a paper that was incomplete or inadequate but could not give a D or an F to an entire collection of work that a student had chosen as his or her best. “Portfolios are not about assessment; they’re about achievement, reflection, and celebration” (Dudley, p. 20).

Storage space for portfolios is a concern in many over crowded classrooms. Storage containers that don’t clutter the educational environment are preferred by most teachers. The most popular storage systems are file sized crates and file cabinet drawers.
Whatever storage system is selected it must be easily accessible to the students (Jasmine, 1995).

**Teacher Perceptions of the Legitimacy of Portfolio Assessment**

Teachers are important personnel in the implementation of successful portfolios. Their input would be valuable to states and school districts for future portfolio assessments (Kampfer et al., 2001). The first study on teacher perceptions was conducted in Kentucky where teachers involved in portfolios were surveyed in order to validate the legitimacy of such assessment (Kampfer et al.). Teachers ranked portfolio entries as the highest on the survey requiring the most effort. The teachers averaged between 25 and 35 hours outside of their instructional time for each portfolio during the school year.

Portfolio entries involved items, such as, what to include in the portfolio and how to implement or construct each entry. Facilitating social relationships between peers, documenting progress, developing support, and assessing multiple settings to determine academics from all subjects were the other four categories listed by teachers requiring their effort (Kampfer et al.).

Kampfer and other researchers also analyzed open-ended questions on the survey and divided them into thematic units, such as time, perceived support, perceived validity, perceived benefits, training issues, scoring and portfolio changes. Time issues were mentioned by 66% of the teachers such as working with the students and completing paperwork. Fifteen percent of the teachers commented on administrative support from claims of extremely supportive administrations to limited administrative assistance. Twenty-six percent of the participant’s teachers commented on validity issues with both negative and positive responses. Thirty-nine percent listed benefits of portfolios to
students and their responses ranged from no benefit to extremely beneficial to students. Portfolio training was listed by 14% of teachers and 27% mentioned scoring; almost all comments in both areas were negative (Kampfer et al.).

Teachers began using portfolios because their students could not respond well to standardized tests (Tienery, Carter, et al.). Portfolios as alternatives allow assessments to be modified to meet a student’s needs. This flexibility of portfolio type, content, procedure, and purpose is seen as a major flaw by some educators, students, and parents (Juniewicz, 2003). Critics of this flexibility would be more supportive of the portfolio assessment if the purpose was more clearly defined (Juniewicz). The same flexibility was viewed as a benefit by other teachers because it gave them the freedom to select bits and pieces of different portfolio concepts to create an assessment model that would work for their students in their classrooms, providing a more accurate assessment for their students (Bennett, 2003). Critics of the movement to standardize portfolio assessment indicate this necessity for standardization must be resisted if portfolios are the alternative to standardized tests. If not, portfolios will fail to adapt to the learning needs and individuality of the student and detract from their original purpose as an alternate assessment for students who do not typically succeed in standardized testing situations (Tienery, Carter, et al.).

All portfolio assessment, while flexible, relies on predetermined components such as rubrics, requirements, and guidelines to help ensure validity and reliability (Apple & Shimo, 2002). Even with these guidelines the validity and reliability of portfolio assessment are difficult to confirm. If, for example, a rubric requires the student select specific types of writing pieces and the student does not feel he/she has a best piece in the
specified category, the concept of reflecting on one’s best work becomes invalid (Dudley, 2001). Rubrics that not only give a score or grade, but inform students what they have achieved and how they can continue to improve, are beneficial to portfolio evaluations (Dudley). As a student becomes familiar with self-assessment, he or she should move from simple comments, such as, “I like it”, to complex comparisons between portfolio pieces or critical analysis of the entire portfolio (Chan, 2000).

The four types of self-reflection in portfolio assessments are documentation, comparison, integration, and presentation. Documentation reflection discusses why a child selected a specific piece. Comparison involves finding similarities and differences between different pieces in the portfolio. Integration reflection encompasses the entire portfolio. Presentation reflection involves the portfolio review from other perspectives (Chan, 2000).

Teachers also see the necessity of shared ownership in the portfolio process. If teachers control the content and do not encourage student input, the student fails to understand the purpose and loses interest in working with his or her portfolio (Poel, 1998). It also benefits students to self-evaluate because it provides them the opportunity to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and find ways to improve (Poel). For example, one student in Poel’s study would continually get the teacher off track to avoid written assignments. When confronted by the teacher, the student admitted he had a serious problem and confided he thought maybe he was retarded. After implementing a student portfolio where self-reflections provided the opportunity for him to review his work and measure his own progress, his self-esteem rose and his attitude towards learning improved (Poel).
Teachers agreed the focus of assessment should be on the individual learner and the comparison of progress between portfolio components (Jensen & Klonicke, 1999; Swartz, 1999). Portfolios, especially those that show student work in varying stages of development allow the evaluator to observe student growth and assess student strengths and weaknesses in a cumulative work (Mondock, 1997). The reasoning behind this claim is that the work-samples are a collection of tasks completed over time and accurately demonstrate a learner's progress (Apple & Shimo, 2002). However, like most qualitative data, portfolios are difficult to analyze and score, even using a rubric with predetermined criteria (Sewell, Marczak, & Horn, 2003). The concern is that scoring is subjective based on an individual judgment and difficult to confirm validity and reliability (Peterson & Neill, 1999).

The student portfolio can be assessed holistically and analytically (Apple & Shimo, 2000). Holistic portfolio assessment gives one grade to the entire portfolio based on predetermined criteria. Analytic portfolio assessment gives each of the predetermined criteria a grade. It is believed the most reliable and valid portfolio assessment uses a combination of the two methods, allowing the evaluator to judge a collection of work to determine if the learner has progressed towards his or her goals (Apple & Shimo). Organizing and evaluating portfolios are such time-consuming tasks that many educators do not feel they are worth the effort (Sewell et al., 2003). Teachers are also concerned with the scoring reliability (Kampfer et al., 2001). To date, no research has been able to confirm a formula that is reliable and valid for both instructional and informational purposes (Kim, 2004). Fairness of an assessment is a major concern regarding the appropriateness, interpretations, and bias of the assessment and/or evaluator (Linn, 1993).
One option is to compare a student’s knowledge at the beginning of the year to that at end of the year to determine genuine growth (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Originally, portfolios served as responses to the failure of standardized testing (Tierney, Clark, et al., 1998). As educators searched for alternatives to objective, analytic, and quantitative forms of assessment, the portfolio became an alternate approach to assessment in education (Salvia et al., 2007). The student portfolio has been proclaimed as a creditable contribution to effective teaching evaluation (Centra, 1994). Portfolios can be a “valuable tool in special education where students sometimes lack paper and pencil test taking skills” (Swartz, p. 7). Evaluating a student’s work over a period of time provides the opportunity to accurately measure a student’s growth, this continuous assessment increases reliability and validity (Gordon, 1996). A classroom teacher, who is working with students, is aware of how the decisions were made, and how the process was interpreted. Thus, the teacher may understand well his/her students’ work demonstrated in the portfolio. An outside source may not recognize the link between different components in the portfolio. If interpretations of portfolio evaluation become unclear, the validity and reliability of the assessment may be faulty (Gordon). In addition, evaluating portfolios also relies on a teacher’s careful scrutiny of components and processes of development when interpreting the contents and providing judgments based on facts. This may be a difficult or impossible task for some teachers (Gordon).

Portfolios are viewed positively by teachers in Paulson’s study (1991). They agreed that a portfolio is a purposeful, integrated collection of student work that shows student effort, progress or achievement in one or more areas with self-reflection, as well as student participation in determining the focus, content, and merit (Paulson, et al.,
1991). Several teachers in the Juniewicz’s study (2003), however, indicated their uncomfortable feelings with student portfolios because the implementation would require a major change in their classroom routines and their philosophy of education. According to Chan (2000), many students, especially those with learning disabilities, struggled with their self-reflection of the portfolio. To assist struggling learners, teachers provided examples of good self-reflections, modeled ways to comment on different types of work, or guided the reflection with questions. While these steps may be a necessity to cultivate the self-reflection process, it becomes difficult to distinguish the student’s authentic self-reflections from those the student had simply copied or written with an adult’s influence (Chan).

Another support strategy is to offer students a guideline to learn the technique of self-reflection (Mondock, 1997). Sample questions would be (a) What is the purpose of your writing; (b) Is there anything you need to change to make the topic clearer or more interesting to the reader; (c) Could anything be improved through revisions; and (d) What do you like about your piece that you think would appeal to your reader (Mondock). Student reflections can be documented in learning logs, journals, or other forms as long as the student is involved in the thinking process of learning (Burke & Fogerty, 1994). Without student reflection, the portfolio lacks insight to the students’ learning process and is merely a collection of products (Mondock). If the student does not participate in reflection and evaluation process, he/she would become the producer and the teacher would become the evaluator. In such instance, the student takes little or no ownership of his/her portfolio and no pride in revision for improvement (Raines, 1996). While several studies mentioned the importance of student reflection as a component to validate the
portfolio and to give a student a feeling of ownership, the majority of teachers believed the greatest impact of student effort and motivation was that their parents and teachers would review and discuss the components of their portfolio (Hall & Hewett-Garvis, 2000).

Meeting a student, to discuss his/her portfolio, allows the teacher an opportunity to point out areas of growth to recognize his/her achievement. The teacher can point to a specific portfolio item to show the child’s progress and explain how he/she performed at the beginning of the school year and improved by the end (Poel, 1998).

Another use of portfolios is for child study team members or specialists, such as a speech-language pathologist, to examine student work as part of the eligibility screening. One school in Ohio, uses student portfolios to help define problems, develop a hypothesis, and create assessment questions to target the learning concern. Rather than relying exclusively on standardized tests which often do not reveal the problem or offer a direction for intervention, the school uses the student’s portfolio as a functional assessment tool. Observations and evaluation notes; interviews with the teacher, parents, and student; and work-samples are placed in the student portfolio. The team or specialists can confirm the identified problem by measuring student progress. If the student is classified to receive special education services his/her portfolio will become part of his/her IEP (Kratcoski, 1998).

**Student Roles and Responsibilities in Developing a Portfolio**

Many students are apathetic towards learning and assessment (Boerum, 2000). In Apple and Shimo’s study (2003), students listed numerous positive comments regarding portfolio assessments. These included benefits from reflections on learning, cooperative
learning opportunities, ample teacher feedback, and enjoyable experiences in working on their portfolios. There are four main reasons for students to be willing to participate in portfolio activities (Sweet, 1999). These are (a) a joy of creation and ownership, (b) goal awareness, (c) individual accountability, and (d) continuous and extended learning opportunities. Students also made comments, such as, “I felt like studying harder because the portfolio is my own [product];” and “I worked hard so I wouldn’t make my group members and partners [get] in trouble.” (p.56). It seems that student portfolios are one of the means to help students understand and practice skills they can develop to become lifelong learners (Sweet, 1999).

Various studies indicated the importance of student input, self-evaluation, and reflection as a method to help students understand what they know, and to inform teachers and parents about the learner’s performance (e.g. Apple & Shimo, 2004; Frazier & Paulson, 1992; Herter, 1991; Poel, 1998; Politano & Davies, 1994). As a learner, portfolios can promote a student’s growth in self-assessment, especially in self-critique or peer review activities (Tierney, Clark, et al. 1998). Self-evaluation is a means of helping develop pride in student accomplishments and guiding students in setting new goals that are realistic and attainable (Politano & Davies). For example, Frazier and Paulson (1992) studied student progress using portfolios. These students were identified as reluctant writers. Their teacher believed they would perform better if they understood the criteria of the analytical writing assessment (AWA) that was used for judging their work. Before implementing student portfolios, she taught students how to assess their own work using the AWA format. Knowing the evaluation process allowed the students to become better and more confident writers. Shortly after implementing the portfolio one student wrote, “I
think my story had a good start. I need to add more ideas.” A few months later, the reflection was more confident and analytical. The same student said, “I think I improved in my cursive writing and my AWA scores. If you do not believe me, look in my portfolio. It has proof. Just read my first story and my last” (Frazier & Paulson, 1992, p. 64). Analytical reflections from older students included statements such as; “Elaborating, providing suspenseful plots, and holding the audience's interest are what I do best as a writer” and “The more I write, the more I understand about myself and the world I live in” (Herter, 1991, p. 90). It was found that many students had similar experiences, and teachers evidenced student growth from simple initial reflections to complex reflections that were articulate, meaningful, persuasive, and insightful (Frazier & Paulson; Herter; Poel).

In contrast, the results of Chan’s study (2000) did not support that the student’s participation in self-reflective activities led to a better portfolio collection. In the study, students appeared to be excited about their portfolio being recognized, but they did not understand the purpose of developing their portfolio. To help students create portfolios, teachers presented samples of finished portfolios for students to better understand the requirements and criteria. It was noted that many learners who were comfortable with traditional testing were frustrated at developing portfolios and did not like setting their own goals, selecting pieces for their portfolios, or reflecting on the work they completed (Apple & Shimo, 2002).

The importance of students’ understanding of portfolio development and their ownership is the focus for their success. Students should understand a portfolio is not a collection of perfect pieces (Schwartz 1999), and they should select their own topics,
voices, and genres (Peterson & Neill, 1999). Students enjoyed searching through their portfolio for well written pieces and sharing them with their peers. Portfolios serve as the catalyst for students to think and make decisions, build pride and self confidence, and assume ownership (Swartz). Allowing for the uniqueness of individual students to emerge when working and assessing portfolios helps students build a positive self concept (Swartz, 1999; Jensen & Klonicke, 1999). Listening to students was another important facet mentioned by teachers for incorporating pieces to include in a portfolio because children enjoy writing about their experiences (Swartz).

While many teachers believe all students benefit from portfolio development and assessment, they see an added bonus for students with special needs, whose growth is not always accurately measured in standardized tests (Jensen & Klonicke, 1999). Teachers commented, “The look in a student’s eyes when he proudly shows his accomplishments in his portfolio says it all. They have grown academically, emotionally, socially, and in their self-esteem. These are all steps to become life long learners.” (Jensen & Klonicke, p. 49).

Despite the many positive comments, some concerns were raised by students (Juniewicz, 2003). These included the amount of time they spent to develop their portfolios and confusion over different criteria required by their teachers. For example, one student said, “I do not enjoy doing portfolios because I think it is too much of a hassle.” (p. 75). Other negative comments on portfolio assessments included, “time-consuming,” “too much work,” “complicated tasks,” and “difficult work” (Apple & Shimo, 2002).
Summary of Literature Review

Many school districts have implemented portfolios as an alternate assessment. Teachers and school administrators must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of portfolio implementation before making a decision to use it as a form of assessment.

Many educators believe authentic portfolios allow teachers to visually observe and document student growth and achievement. Portfolios are multidimensional and are easily adapted to meet the needs of students at different grade levels, with different abilities and motivation (Raines, 1996). Specific skills can be taught to individual students in developing their own portfolios. This facet allows teachers to tailor lessons to meet the goals and objectives in student IEPs (Poel, 1998). A portfolio produces tangible evidence to support the teacher’s opinions when discussing a student’s strengths and weaknesses (Poel). Rather than assigning grades to disjointed papers, grouping student work in a portfolio provides a common link between each piece of work samples (Salend, 1998). Students often revisit a completed piece to rewrite it using another voice or different mode. They spend the year writing and improving as they build on strengths and struggle to resolve concerns (Salend). Portfolios easily adapt to cover a broad scope of subjects to uniquely assess students by non-traditional means. Portfolio Assessments offer the possibility of addressing shortcomings of traditional assessments (Sewell et al., 2003). Teachers of students with special needs often prefer using informal observations over standardized achievement tests; and portfolios support this natural preference (Burkel & Fogerty, 1994).

Some educators believe that labeling portfolios simply as an alternative assessment tool may be a mischaracterization of the nature and goals of portfolio
pedagogy (Gordon, 1995). Portfolios involve a movement from summative to formative evaluation and from product orientation stressing quality standards to a learner-centered emphasis on student development. The power relationships also shift to teacher and student jointly making decisions and setting goals (Tierney, Clark, et al., 1998).

In spite of its various appealing characteristics, portfolio implementation has many legitimate drawbacks. If the focus, goals, and criteria of the portfolio are not clear, it could end up as a miscellaneous collection of artifacts without presenting student growth or achievement, thus, these may not have any value as an assessment tool (Sewell et al., 2003). If a showcase portfolio is used highlighting only the finished work without previous drafts, or if the teacher’s influence is the major guide for revision, the true level of student ability may be obscured. Creating a rubric to guide students’ individual portfolio development, and again for teacher grading, can be a difficult and cumbersome task. The planning, training, conferencing, revising, and grading of portfolios are all necessary and time consuming. A teacher must be very organized to create a cooperative and secure learning environment in the classroom, and students must be able to work independently.

There are some concerns about portfolio assessment. One is that no standards are established for portfolio evaluations, and the evaluations are based on teachers’ judgment. Another is the question about portfolio validity. Portfolios may be considered being less reliable than the quantitative evaluations such as test scores (Sewell et al., 2003). Thus, inexperienced teachers need training and guidance in conjunction with extra time to plan, organize, and implement an effective portfolio assessment.
The approach to educational instruction and assessment is constantly in flux. New trends begin and others fade. One trend is a shift from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered instruction with the teacher serving as a facilitator, and these changes demand modifications in assessments (Tierney, Clark, et al., 1998). Another trend is standard-based instruction following the NCLB’s requirement. Portfolio assessment may develop a synergy with standard-based instruction as a form of assessment to support teaching and learning. From an historical perspective, this shift from traditional paper and pencil testing to an alternative assessment may be classified as the shift from the quantitative to the qualitative assessment.

In order to verify teacher’s current perceptions of portfolio assessments, this present study has investigated a group of teachers in southern Wisconsin to obtain additional information to contribute to previous findings reviewed in this chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine the teacher perceptions on portfolio assessments. Because of the interpretive nature of this study, a qualitative research method was employed.

Participants

Ten teachers from public elementary, middle, and high schools located in southern Wisconsin participated in the study. The teachers have had experiences in using the portfolio assessment as an alternative method or supplemental component to standardized testing. All participants were educators of students with disabilities. One was a special education teacher in a self-contained classroom, one was a resource room teacher where students were pulled-out to receive additional support, one was a special education teacher who supported special needs students in a general education setting, and seven were general education teachers who taught students with disabilities in their inclusive classrooms. Nine of the teachers had at least two years experience in alternate assessments using portfolios. Table 3.1 presents information of the participating teachers.

Table 3.1 General Information of the Participating Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Self-Contained</th>
<th>Resource Pull-out</th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Female Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Design

This researcher believed qualitative methods would provide the multidimensional data necessary to gain an understanding of the dynamics of teacher perceptions regarding portfolio implementation or assessment. Therefore, face-to-face interviews were the primary source of data in this study to obtain a better understanding of the various participants' perspectives. Letters of consent were obtained from teachers willing to participate and interview arrangements were made (See Appendix A for consent form).

Materials

Each interview began with a short survey of nine questions to gather participating teachers' demographic information. These survey questions were developed by the researcher following similar surveys presented in Kampfer et al. (2001), Manning et al. (2000), and Swartz (1999). The questions included age, gender, years of teaching experience, years of experiences with portfolio assessments, student grade levels, and education they received. The data provided information necessary to compare teacher perceptions of portfolio assessment with their educational background, knowledge of portfolio assessments, and teaching experiences (See Appendix B).

The researcher also developed interview protocols with five sections including: (1) Teacher's Knowledge of Portfolios, (2) Pros and Cons of Developing and Implementing Portfolios, (3) Effectiveness as an Educational Tool and Influence on Instructional Practices, (4) Pros and Cons of Portfolio Legitimacy as an Alternative Assessment, and (5) Student Roles and Responsibilities of Developing Portfolios. Each section consisted of a set of questions related to the topic. The interview questions were developed by the researcher after an extensive literature review of research focusing on

In addition to interview questions, written notes and a tape recorder were used to record interviewees’ responses with the permission of the participants.

Procedure

Seven of the ten initial interviews were conducted in person. One interview was conducted by telephone, and one was conducted through emails. The tenth educator had moved from Wisconsin to Arizona, she completed an email version of the interview questions and followed up with a detailed discussion by telephone. Follow-up interviews were conducted by email or telephone for elaboration or clarification.

Prior to the interview, a positive rapport was established between the researcher and participant. The researcher clarified the definition of operational terms used in the study and explained the interview procedure. Participants were asked to sign a consent form and encouraged to ask clarification questions during the interview.

Following the demographic questions the interviewer sequentially asked the open-ended questions listed in the questionnaire. If the response was brief, the researcher would encourage the participant to elaborate. Impromptu questions were asked, with a focus on broad open-ended questions that allowed the participant an opportunity to fully express their opinions. All responses were tape recorded as well as note taking by the researcher. At the same time, copies of portfolio forms, rubrics, or administrative guidelines the interviewees had used, were requested in order for the researcher to understand their implementation of student portfolios.
To ensure accurate responses the researcher observed participants during interviews. This observation might provide insight on the participant’s behavior and verbal communication during responses, recording observations to questions e.g. Does the participant sound confident or uncertain; clear or confused; convincing or doubtful; rational or illogical; consistent or contradictory; use simple language or elaborate with emotion. This technique expanded on the interview content and helped confirm, enrich, and sometimes contradict the content of the participant’s responses. The interview and observation were implemented in an integrated fashion during each face-to-face interview.

**Content Validity, Reliability, and Internal Consistency**

To establish content validity of the interview instrument, two special education teachers and one general education teacher, experienced in teaching students with disabilities in inclusive settings, reviewed the questions and provided suggestions for revision. A meeting was held with the teachers to review each question for clarity in meaning and to ensure the questions were an appropriate means to measure the information being sought. A pilot study with interviews with each of the three teachers was conducted. A discussion took place after the interviews to make sure the researcher followed the interview procedure and to ensure the accuracy of the interviewee’s responses and researcher’s recording notes. Meanwhile, to check for reliability of the interview questions, the teachers were interviewed on two separate occasions, and the responses were compared for consistency. In addition, internal consistency was determined by comparing both interview responses. It was confirmed the questions were measuring the same information.
Data Analysis

The information gathered from the interviews, pertaining to the participant’s perceptions and knowledge on student portfolios was analyzed based on the content of the interview and the process observed during the interview.

All responses were tape recorded during each interview, and transcribed as a written. The researcher reviewed the transcribed data several times and themes were developed to organize the data.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS
Profile of the Sample

The participants in this study were teachers working in diverse educational settings in southern Wisconsin. These teachers were identified through administrators, school secretaries, and peers. Ten teachers from seven different schools volunteered to be interviewed. Eight of the teachers were female and two were male. All teachers completed demographic surveys to provide personal data. Their age ranged from 29 to 59 with teaching experience from eight to twenty-nine years. Nine of the ten teachers had taught using portfolios for two or more years. Only one special education teacher had been introduced to portfolios and was in the learning process under the guidance of a general education teacher. Of the participants, 50% held a Bachelors Degree, 40% a Masters Degree, and 10% a Doctoral degree. Sixty percent of participants had one or more additional educational degrees. Forty percent had degrees not directly linked to education. The high school teacher held a secondary teaching degree in mathematics. The three middle school teachers held K-8 elementary teaching degrees. In addition, one had a second teaching degree in special education and another was earning a secondary teaching certificate in science. All six elementary teachers held degrees related to elementary education and half had an additional degree or certification related to education including reading, early childhood, or special education. (See Table 4.1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Q 1 Current Age</th>
<th>Q 2 Gender</th>
<th>Q 3 No. of years Teaching</th>
<th>Q 4 No of years using portfolios</th>
<th>Q 5 Current Grade Level (Other Levels Taught)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3 &amp; 4 yr old K</td>
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<td>30-39</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7-8 (K-3)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20-29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7-8 (K-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>50-59</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>K-5 (Undergrad &amp; Grad)</td>
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<td>50-59</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7-8 (4-6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>K-3, Curriculum Generalist</td>
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<td>30-39</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7-8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>20-29</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Birth – 8 Special Education</td>
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<th>Q 8 Other Educational Degrees</th>
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<td>Early Childhood</td>
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Analysis of the Data

Participants’ comments in the open-ended interview questions are presented as either direct quotes indicated as such by quotation marks, or paraphrased comments of aggregated responses in themes.

Analysis of the research question was divided and addressed in five sections. Each section was arranged into sub-themes to report the teachers’ perceptions and comments. The five sections are: 1) their knowledge of student portfolios, 2) development and implementation of student portfolios, 3) portfolios effectiveness as an educational tool influencing instructional practices, 4) legitimacy of portfolio assessment, 5) student roles and responsibilities in developing portfolios.

Teacher’s Knowledge of Student Portfolios

Definition of a student portfolio. Each of the ten teachers provided an accurate definition of portfolio assessment. The definitions ranged on a spectrum from a basic statement to a very complex concept. Sample definitions included: “It is a grouping of student work,” “A portfolio is a collection of work samples and assessments to measure a child’s growth,” and “Portfolio assessment is a purposeful goal driven collection of student work that demonstrates a student’s progress and accomplishments. It provides a glimpse into the student as a person, not just a student.”

Portfolio training. Eight of the ten teachers (80%) had attended some form of teacher training on portfolios before implementation. Seven (70%) had attended additional in-service training after implementing student portfolios. All teachers were involved with some level of co-teaching or peer support. Four of the teachers (40%) had taken college classes on portfolio development. Nine teachers (90%) indicated reading
professional journals about portfolios, and eight teachers (80%) purchased one or more books to enrich their knowledge of portfolio development. One had no formal training.

Knowledge of portfolio types. All teacher responses showed that they were familiar with the two basic types of portfolios: the process and product. Both types were popular in classrooms, depending on the portfolio goals. Three (30%) used product portfolios and seven (70%) used process portfolios in their classroom. Teachers used a variety of names for portfolios. These included Collection Portfolio, Showcase Portfolio, Evaluation Portfolio, Proficiency Portfolio, Writing Portfolio, Active Portfolio, Six-Traits of Writing Portfolio, and the P-5 Assessment Portfolio. Both product and process portfolios were used as an alternative assessment to evaluate student performance.

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) implemented the P-5 Schools in 1986 with the assistance of Alverno College. The concept was to supplement existing educational programs with student portfolio assessment to help meet the needs of low achieving students and to help educate transient students who moved from one school to another during the year. All the teachers were knowledgeable about P-5 Schools and their use of portfolios; but four teachers (40%) had never taught in a P-5 school and were uncertain of the specific portfolio procedures or contents. Six teachers (60%) had been or were employed by a P-5 school and were very knowledgeable on P-5 Portfolio system. (See Appendix D for details on P-5 Schools.)

The Six-Traits of Writing Portfolio System was used by three teachers (30%) as a teaching tool, and as a means of alternative assessment. The Pre-K teacher used a modified version to accommodate young students at ages of three and four. She tested the students during the first week of school, twice more during the year, and again in June to
measure developmental and academic progress to determine individual student goals and teaching strategies. “I need to assess students so I am able to determine what each student knows and is able to do. With that knowledge I know what needs to be taught. I keep samples of their written work and pictures to measure [their] growth during the year.”

Another elementary teacher said, “I’ve used portfolios for tracking writing progress. Student’s self-evaluate and set writing goals related to the Six-Traits; I evaluate and provide feedback, and then we conference to compare our ideas. Students share their portfolios and select best pieces to share with the class, enter contests, or to submit for magazine publication.” The other teacher used this type of assessment after receiving an in-service training in the district. She used the following web site as a guideline to answer questions. (See Appendix E or web site: http://doe.sd.gov/curriculum/6plus1/k-2.asp for additional details on the Six-Traits of Writing Portfolio.)

Teacher Perceptions of Their Competency in Portfolios

One teacher (10%) who rated himself as a novice commented he was learning through a co-teacher’s coaching. Six teachers (60%) ranked themselves as adequate, one teacher (10%) rated herself between adequate and expert, and two teachers (20%) rated themselves as experts having eleven or more years of portfolio experience.

Development and Implementation of Student Portfolios

Benefits. The benefits teachers indicated with portfolio development and implementation were uneventful transitions from traditional teaching methods to student portfolios. Seven teachers (70%) reported successful implementation of portfolios after creating a model for students, and making adjustments to meet the needs of individual students. Two teachers (20%) indicated a smooth transition from the traditional teaching
practice to implementing portfolios. The remaining teacher indicated that portfolio integration often made her feel like she was “jumping around too much and missing important instructional time.” Six teachers (60%) were offered continuous support from school personnel during portfolio organization and throughout the entire year. One teacher, who was provided continuous support, reported his success with portfolio implementation varied slightly. He was an inclusion teacher working as part of a cooperative team with three general education teachers. The portfolio systems were developed by the general education teachers to meet their requirements and student’s needs; therefore, the procedures and content were different for each portfolio system.

One of the elementary teachers mentioned that her students were excited to create the portfolio covers and were eager to put the first completed piece into their portfolio and share their work. A second teacher reported a “painless transition” because at the beginning of the year goals were developed, portfolio procedures were explained, and a class routine was established.

Because of the portfolio requirement, teachers were seeking resources to enrich their knowledge of this alternate approach. Teachers mentioned helpful information and books on portfolio development during the interviews. These were *Six-Traits of Writing Portfolio* by Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (Appendix E), *Portfolio Planner: A Step-By-Step Guide to Portfolio Assessment* by Jasmine (1995) (Appendix F) and *How to Assess Students Work* by Lim (1997) (Appendix G). Two teachers used the Step-by-Step Guide because it included several planning and guide sheets for both students and teachers. They also used Reflections of Writing guides and Peer Editing Response sheets from Jasmine’s book (1995). In addition, the fifth grade teacher incorporated a
Generalized Task Rubric, a Performance Task Recording Sheet, and Group Process Evaluation sheet (See appendix F). This teacher began with the primary sheet and as student’s proficiency level increased she began using the more complex guide sheets. Another teacher supported this teaching method and reported that she differentiated portfolio requirements based on student levels. After introducing a new form, she provided a model for students before requiring them to implement it. For example, she completed an evaluation form and wrote a reflection on the first entry students placed in their portfolios as if she were the student. She used worksheets found in Lim’s book (1997) to guide her evaluations and reflections. All students were required to complete the evaluation form and portfolio checklist from Lim’s book and higher-level students were also required to complete a reflection on their next portfolio entry.

One of the teachers reported the school administrators designed the original portfolio program based on the specific skills required for students at each grade level. The school curriculum was guided using benchmarks, and portfolios were designed to measure these benchmarks. Another teacher supported this statement and added, “The transition was smooth because the portfolio plan was well organized and the staff were supported.” Portfolios have assisted students in reaching their goals and demonstrate evidence of their performance and progress.

**Concerns.** The teachers’ concerns with developing and implementing portfolios are organized into the following categories: time, organization, storage, staffing, cost, grading, and portfolio logistics.

**Time.** Time was the biggest concern teachers mentioned for portfolio development and implementation. One teacher commented a huge amount of time was...
devoted not only to developing a portfolio system, but training and meeting students to
discuss portfolio components and samples. Another teacher agreed that a major portion of
her time was spent preparing for portfolios, during class with students, or after school
reviewing student work. Teachers also mentioned that they spent a massive amount of
time to determine portfolio contents, procedures, and developing rubrics or guidelines to
assist students.

Organization. Four teachers (40%) indicated organization of portfolios is often a
concern. At times both teachers and students struggled with organizational issues. One
teacher said, “Portfolios may show student growth but I am constantly struggling to be
organized.” Another said, “I guess organization becomes confusion for some students as
they try to understand a very complex system with many steps. Some students never
master the process no matter how much time they are given to get organized.”

One teacher indicated a possible difficulty in organization was teacher attitude.
She said, “Since it is the nature of teachers to be controlling, several of her colleagues
experienced difficulty with student’s portfolio organization because they never allowed
students to make decisions regarding portfolio contents.”

Storage. Two teachers (20%) were concerned with storing portfolios in their
classrooms. Both teachers were teaching middle school students with over a hundred
portfolios developed each year. One teacher said, “I have file cabinets dedicated to
portfolio storage but inevitably someone’s portfolio gets misplaced and there is a panic
until it is located.” A special needs teacher, co-teaching with several general education
teachers, indicated a complication to learning the different portfolio systems in each
classroom was to remember the various storage arrangements. Some teachers
alphabetized the portfolios, others filed them by student groups or ability level; the storage systems were almost as diverse as the portfolio systems. The limited space for storage made it difficult for teachers to keep the portfolios in an appropriate order and to be easily accessible.

**Staffing.** Teachers indicated additional staff should be provided to support teachers when conferencing with students. One teacher indicated she needed additional staff when evaluating Pre-K students. To avoid interruptions or assistance from peers her goal was to evaluate students outside the classroom. She said, “Attempting to test one student, while 24 other children are engaged in activities in close proximity to the testing location is not an ideal testing or conferencing situation.” Staffing was mentioned by three other teachers regarding the difficulties they encountered while setting up or conducting conferences with students. One teacher discussed the role of their building’s portfolio representative who checks teacher progress on portfolio development and implementation. She reported about half of the teachers in her school doubted the position was necessary or functioned effectively. Two teachers indicted a portfolio specialist was a key element for implementing successful portfolios. However, their concern was that the specialist position was only part time, limiting their support.

**Cost.** Seven teachers (70%) raised concerns about the expenditures for items such as: covers, crates to store the portfolios, artistic supplies, and books or journals on portfolio development.

**Grading.** Fifty percent of the teachers indicated they completed portfolio assessment in their classrooms rather than taking crates of portfolios home. One teacher reported she only took crates home at the end of the year so she could take her time when
assessing the entire portfolio. During the rest of the year, her students work-in-progress, were kept in manila folders which were not difficult to transport. A teacher using portfolios for several years reported she would use large blocks of time to grade an entire class in one sitting in an effort to grade consistently. She also indicated the use of a rubric for grading, but added, “When a student is making progress it is important to recognize and praise a student for his or her accomplishment even if it falls short of the rubric.”

Another teacher was concerned with her accuracy when assessing eighth grade student portfolios because other teachers or outside evaluators may compare their findings to the classroom teachers. For example, when a student fails a portion of the standardized test the district uses the portfolio grade provided by the teacher as proof of proficiency. In this situation, an outside evaluator is invited to re-evaluate the student performance to determine the proficiency level. Thus, the pressure is on the classroom teacher to provide an accurate portfolio grade to match the evaluator’s judgment. Another method used to verify a student’s proficiency is by a team decision. A team meeting, including the participation of the student’s teachers, parents, principal and any other key personnel, makes this decision. At the meeting, each teacher presents a portion of the student’s portfolio providing the documentation to support the grade that was given. An accurate grade with adequate documentation is crucial for a portfolio evaluation.

One teacher claimed “portfolios are not an effective method of determining a student’s proficiency if he/she fails the standardized test.” This teacher found that often students who failed in standardized tests would also fail to obtain proficient ratings in portfolio assessment. For example, a guideline listing the necessary components in a writing assignment may be provided to a student as a modification; however, it is still up
to the student to produce the work independently. If this student receives any outside assistance, the writing sample is no longer a valid representation of the student’s independent work. The teacher claimed such outside support interferes with accurate portfolio assessment.

*Portfolio Logistics.* Eight teachers (80%) enjoyed using portfolios in the classrooms as a learning tool and as an assessment. Seven teachers (70%) completed student portfolios and kept them accessible for the following year. Three of the teachers (30%) indicated they never actually finalize all the portfolio components but keep the incomplete portfolios available for future evaluation purposes. The teachers only finalized portfolios that were requested by the child study team or the student’s new teacher. Teachers raised questions about the practicality of portfolios that require so much time and effort when only a small portion would be used in the future. Teachers also commented that storage space was a premium concern and storing large quantities of portfolios was impractical and cumbersome. To eliminate the storage problem in southern Wisconsin schools the current policy is for classroom teachers to save portfolios for one year; and send the previous year’s portfolio home with the student.

*Portfolio Effectiveness as an Educational Tool influencing Instructional Practices*

*Benefits.* Eight teachers (80%) reported multiple benefits of utilizing the student portfolios as an educational tool. Their comments included student pride, ownership, editing and revision, organization, conferencing, and continuous evaluation. When discussing the portfolio influence on instructional practices, seven of the teachers (70%) reported similar benefits with additional comments on instructional adaptations.
Student pride. Four teachers (40%) indicated students sharing finished portfolio entries with the class. For example, one teacher found students enjoyed sharing their portfolio writings, so she designated an author’s chair specifically for students to share portfolio pieces with peers. Another teacher pointed out students beamed with pride at their portfolio accomplishments. One teacher said, “My students shared their portfolios with peers and writing took on a new importance in class”

Ownership. Teachers reported that the majority of students, even the lower elementary students, began to value their work and handle it carefully. For example, one teacher pointed out that if a student accidentally left a portfolio out, it was not uncommon for a fellow student to return it to the file cabinet to prevent it from getting lost. Five of the teachers (50%) reported students were making their own decisions to select pieces to be included in their portfolios. Six teachers (60%) indicated students grew through self-reflections and were able to set future goals for themselves. Three of the teachers (30%) used guidelines for student reflections at the beginning of the year but only one continued using the reflection guide with all students throughout the year. The other two teachers indicated students were capable of independently writing a self-reflection. The teachers using the Six-Traits of Writing encouraged students to rely on their copy of “The Young Writer’s Guide” to create and edit their work, because the questions in the guideline helped the students with writing a self-reflection.

Editing and Revision. Nine of the teachers (90%) reported their students’ skills improved in editing and revising portfolios. One teacher remarked that it took a while for students to realize they were not capable of producing a perfect writing piece in their first draft. Another pointed out that using computers for revising their writing made the
process “a little less painful for students.” An upper elementary teacher agreed by saying, “One important concept for students was to learn to edit a paper with respect for the author.” Another teacher reported having to spend several days to re-teach proper editing symbols, and work with students as they created a few additional “in class” editing symbols. For example, if a student wasn’t sure about the correction he/she would make a checkmark with a capitol T, “T,” which meant the student should check with the teacher.

A middle school teacher taught her students how to use the editing program “Track Changes” on the computer. Editing became more pleasurable and a game for students where they were paired to edit the same writing sample, print their suggestions, and compare editing notes.

Organization. A major accomplishment for many students was to learn organizational skills, especially for those with disabilities. Forty percent of the teachers reported portfolios helped students gather their work into one location and the portfolio guidelines and rubrics directed their work. Three other teachers (30%) indicated students adapted well to the portfolio routine and worked independently on a variety of tasks.

One teacher admitted working with portfolios also forced her to be organized and follow pre-determine routines and schedules.

Conferencing. Six of the teachers (60%) met with students to discuss some aspect of their portfolio, because they thought it was important to communicate with students. Four of them scheduled regular conferences, and the rest allowed students to schedule meetings as needed. One of the teachers indicated meetings scheduled by students, whenever they felt it was necessary, provided reassurance for students that were unsure of their work. The other teacher allowed students to schedule conferences but also called
conferences herself if she had not met with a student recently. Each teacher scheduled
conferences with a unique criterion. For example, one teacher met with each child before
an entry was placed into the finalized portfolio. At the conference, the student and teacher
would decide which pieces would be placed in the finalized portfolio, along with the
finished piece. Another teacher met with students every other week in a mini-conference
to offer assistance, as needed, or to review previous portfolio entries and helped students
set future goals. Teachers with younger students preferred to discuss their
accomplishments and record student comments and reactions at the conference.

Continuous evaluation. Eight of the teachers (80%) found grading portfolio
entries and reading student reflections or self-assessments, helped the teacher measure
student progress. The two teachers with lower elementary students used portfolio
evaluations as a means to modify and re-teach lessons to students who lacked proficiency
of a concept or skill previously taught. One Pre-K teacher used the portfolio assessment
to flag students she perceived to be at risk. If a child demonstrated a specific weakness, or
there was little achievement between assessments, a special education teacher or other
specialists may offer additional support to the child. The portfolio became a valuable
record of the child’s accomplishments and weaknesses, which helped the team of
professionals, develop intervention strategies to avoid future difficulties.

Instructional adaptations. Two teachers indicated that they were implementing
portfolio procedures by incorporating materials from different texts and learning from
other teachers. One teacher found it was not always an easy transition from previously
planned lessons to portfolio-oriented instruction, but once materials were organized, she
was comfortable with the instructional format. Another found that creating portfolio
components and rubrics to meet the needs of individual students was important. This individuality required a lot of work to organize lessons and materials to follow Vygotsky’s theory of scaffolding for student achievement. Portfolio requirements were designed to help each student reinforce an established skill and begin learning a new skill. The teacher monitored the student’s progress and discussed strategies with the student as he/she worked on the portfolio. The support process continued throughout the year allowing the student to grow at his/her own pace.

An eighth grade teacher indicated that each year many students failed in one or more sections of the eight-grade proficiency test. The district uses student portfolios as an alternate assessment for these students. Teachers graded individual student work using three levels such as; basic, proficient or advanced. A rainbow system was developed by one teacher to determine which of her students may be struggling. Rainbows had six colors, each color matching one of the portfolio sections of mathematics, science, social studies, reading, writing, and language arts skills. As the student received a proficiency rating in a section, the corresponding area of the rainbow was colored. Students became motivated and wanted to color all of their rainbow sections, and they worked hard to master their learning skills to reach proficiency in each area. All of her students had earned proficient ratings in at least one area, and many mastered skills in most areas. The results of their student’s standardized tests showed that 60 students failed one or more areas of the testing. The portfolios could be used as an alternative measurement to supplement these students’ performance to determine their proficiency levels.
Concerns. The most common concerns raised by teachers were 1) the amount of time spent on portfolio preparation and implementation; 2) students' effort to complete the portfolio; 3) the effect of portfolio implementation on students.

The amount of time spent on portfolio preparation and implementation. The discussion once again turned to time constraints. All teachers added to the time issue with examples such as: providing adequate time for students to write, edit, and revise pieces; working with students one-on-one; meeting with students to explain why portfolios included reports from social studies, mathematical papers, and science labs; and for teachers: time spent on portfolio preparation, and grading entries. Eight teachers (80%) reported portfolios were a valid form of assessment, but also indicated they were extremely complex and a time consuming strategy. While all teachers recognized portfolios as an alternate assessment for students with disabilities, and for students who do not succeed in standardized testing situations, four of the teachers (40%) indicated completing student portfolios was not a necessity for all general education students.

Student’s effort to complete the portfolio. Nine of the teachers (90%) indicated that portfolios served as an effective educational tool to positively influence instruction; however, teachers must be very dedicated to make the process successful. One teacher said, “It is a complex system that doesn’t work without effort.” Another said, “It’s difficult to create a portfolio to match the school curriculum.” The middle school teacher, who developed the rainbow system, indicated that the portfolio assessment was a key strategy in helping students demonstrate their proficiency; therefore a quick and accurate way to monitor students was imperative.
Seven teachers (70%) indicated observing some form of student frustration during editing and revising their portfolio work. For example, some peers were too critical, and occasionally a student was embarrassed by a peer’s comment made about his/her writing or spelling ability. Two teachers indicated organization was a concern for some students. One of the teachers reported that portfolios were not a successful teaching tool for disorganized students; because too much time was spent trying to locate items for the portfolio components rather than working on their skills. Another reported some difficulty in completing all the required tasks for some students with organizational difficulties.

Three teachers (30%) reported assuming responsibility on their portfolio was not easy for some students. One indicated some students did not understand the value of portfolios and they were constantly misplacing pieces or loosing the work in progress.

*The effect of portfolio implementation on students.* Teachers voiced their concerns whether or not the effect of portfolios warranted the time and effort spent to implement portfolios. One teacher said, “We don’t really revisit any work in the portfolio, except to assess, and we don’t include reflections, so I wonder how effective the portfolio actually is as an instructional tool.” Another agreed saying, “I don’t feel like I am getting enough done. I feel like I am missing important things in the curriculum.” One teacher indicated she spent too much time on portfolios, loosing valuable teaching time. Another teacher gave an example of her class. She said, “This past year, only one of my students failed the eight grade proficiency test. This student was not proficient in his portfolio assessment.” Her conclusion was, “Portfolios are just not necessary in our school.”
Legitimacy of Portfolio Assessment

Support as a legitimate alternate assessment. All teachers reported that it is important for all students, including those with special needs, to be assessed on a regular basis. Although different teachers suggested various alternative methods, all teachers mentioned portfolios should be considered as an alternative assessment to meet the needs of students who do not succeed in standardized tests. Other options teachers suggested were to assess students using performance evaluations and observations.

Eight (80%) indicated portfolio assessments were an accurate measure of student proficiency to determine not only what a student knows but also where he/she should go next. One Pre-K teacher reported that portfolios were a better choice because her students had limited reading or writing skills to take standardized tests. Two teachers supported portfolios as a way to see student growth and to provide an accurate assessment even if the student was not on grade level. Four (40%) also commented portfolios could present a child’s work to his/her parents in a systematic manner to show growth.

A veteran teacher who also was the school portfolio liaison said, “Portfolios can be a very authentic form of assessment. It just takes a little organization and work to ensure they are right. Portfolios are continuous assessment. There is no question [that] valid samples reflect the actual learning experience. Teachers should carefully select pieces with student input. Teachers should also document portfolio work through notes, such as anecdotal records, journal entries, or written comments on teacher observations to accompany the work samples. A portfolio with progress charts, comments on discussions during teacher/student conferences, and grading rubrics, offer’s positive proof of its accuracy."
When asked if portfolios were more accurate in assessing students with special needs than traditional standardized tests, all teachers reported the portfolio was more valuable, and that standardized tests rarely examine a student’s true ability and accomplishments, especially those with disabilities, who always failed in standardized testing. Only one teacher indicated her students with disabilities had successfully completed the standardized testing with accommodations, and the portfolio supported their proficiency.

*Concerns as a Legitimate Alternate Assessment.* Seven teachers (70%) stated the portfolio assessment was a valid form of measurement, but raised some key concerns with this type of assessment. Following are the concerns:

1) Accuracy of the portfolio assessment. Teachers mentioned that portfolios are not always an accurate form of assessment of a student’s actual grade level work because portfolio assignments are usually adapted to accommodate the student’s functional level. For example, a teacher may rate a student based on the working level, rather than the academic level that should be targeted. Another teacher supported the need for improved assessment accuracy and indicated that an accurate assessment can only be provided if the collection of work included all work samples of a project or lesson from the beginning to the end.

2) Accuracy of work samples. Teachers claimed that there really is no way to ensure the work samples in a portfolio are random samples, or samples of average work. To assess a portfolio accurately, the reviewer would have to be sure that the contents demonstrated an accurate depiction of the student’s ability. One teacher said, “A concern I have about portfolio assessment that claims to demonstrate a student’s proficiency is
when it [the work sample] is not actually a reflection of the students average work. Sometimes a student produces numerous items, and only one is selected for the portfolio. For example, if a student produces six writing samples of a persuasive essay. Out of six pieces only one demonstrates proficiency, the other five do not, and that one proficient example is selected for the portfolio. Is it really a true representation of the students work? I don’t think so. You have to be very careful to get accurate work samples not just the best.” Another teacher said, “If a student’s work sample is an end product after several teacher revisions does it really depict the student’s ability to produce the work or their ability to make the teacher’s corrections?”

3) Accuracy in grading. A majority of the teachers (90%) felt they were proficient in accurately assessing their students; however, eight of them reported that they had become more proficient at assessing students with practice. Half of the teachers said that the inconvenience of hauling the portfolios home might influence grading. One said, “If the teacher is rushing [to grade all the portfolios in class] so they do not have to take them home, the grades may be faulty.” A second said, “If a teacher resents dragging them home and spending time over the weekend, or a holiday vacation, it may bias the scoring.” Six teachers (60%) thought that after reading numerous portfolios, a teacher may tend to grow weary and not remain consistent with the scoring. Four teachers (40%) indicated concerns about bias. They agreed that some teachers, especially novice teachers, struggled to detach themselves from the students to assess portfolios without bias.
Student Roles and Responsibilities in Developing Portfolios

Student Roles and Responsibilities. Four of the teachers (40%) included student input from the beginning and two (20%) began including students in selecting portfolio pieces later in the year. Comments from these teachers included, “Before we begin, I take time to teach students about portfolios and explain the process and contents,” and “We use two folders for each student. One is called their Working Collection and the other is their Finalized Portfolio. Students select pieces from the Working Collection for revisiting, revision, or new ideas. Each sample placed in the Finalized Portfolio is accompanied by a student’s reflection and either a teacher’s comment sheet or a grading rubric.” The other teachers reported the majority of the student input revolved around their selection of work samples to edit and revise.

Six teachers (60%) indicated student reflections were a component in the portfolio. Three teachers (30%) reported the requirement for students might be varied to correspond with their ability level. Four teachers (40%) used some form of guide to help students focus when writing reflections (See Appendix’s F and G for samples). Three of the six teachers used the Six-Traits of Writing as a guide (See Appendix E). One teacher directed students to include comments on the portfolio sample regarding their feelings about the assignment’s difficulty level, their self-evaluation, and future improvement. Another teacher presented different samples of student reflections, and allowed students to include various reflective writings according to the required work sample.

Six teachers also indicated that a conference was held at least four times per year to meet with their students. One teacher mentioned her second grade students really didn’t understand the reflective process, but she did meet to conference with students and
discuss their progress and the areas for future improvement. The Pre-K teacher’s portfolio included an elaborate rubric for measuring student academic performance and added writing samples each month, as well as pictures showing a child’s progress. She said, “Watching a child advance from a squiggle to a specific letter or tad pole figure, with a circle for a head containing two smaller lopsided circles for eyes and a straight line for a mouth, to a stick figure that now has arms, legs, hands, feet, hair, and ears is quite an amazing accomplishment for a three or four year old. I love watching their faces as they see their old work and comment on what they can do now. I record each child’s comments and keep them with their portfolio as the student’s reflective pieces.”

Student Positive Comments. Eight of the ten teachers (80%) provided their student comments on portfolio implementation. Several teachers mentioned that their students like to work on their own portfolios. One teacher commented she has heard many students say they were proud of their work, that they enjoy sharing their best work with classmates, and they like looking through their own portfolio and those of other students. Another teacher reported positive feedback from a middle school student, who was excited about expanding her vocabulary by learning to use a thesaurus. Another example was a boy that read a great story in another student’s journal and decided to continue the story in his next writing assignment. When the two writings were merged, it became a very interesting story and the students worked together to edit and revise the story for consistency, and then submitted the final version for publication. Other positive comments from students included, “This is fun,” “I can’t believe I use to write that bad[ly]. I am so much better now,” “I don’t enjoy all the work editing and revising. I use to think I could write a perfect thing the first time, now I know I can’t. Revising is just
one of the steps to get to the final stage," "I am amazed it turned out so well," "I didn’t know I could write that good," and "It was hard work, but I did it!"

Student Concerns. During the interview, teachers mentioned their students’ concerns about portfolios, especially the required writing assignments. For example, one teacher working in a middle school, with less proficient writers, indicated very little work was accomplished during portfolio sessions, and that the students spent more time grumbling about writing, than actually writing. Students commented that portfolio day was a day they really didn’t have a lot to do. Another teacher indicated she often did extensive editing of writing assignments previously edited by student peers. Many of her students avoided helping peers with editing by claiming that their editing skills just weren’t that good, or that the other students’ work was beyond help.

Five teachers (50%) mentioned the importance of students having an interest or connection to the portfolio sample. One teacher supported this observation by saying she had encountered resistance from students when they disliked a report topic in her history class. Another middle school teacher overheard two of his students complaining about a writing assignment where they were to reflect on their feelings about the 9/11 disaster. This teacher realized that when a student was not comfortable with the writing assignment, the sample would probably not reflect their best effort; therefore, the sample would not accurately demonstrate the student’s writing ability. Thus, the teacher offers several writing options for his students.

Teachers also reported other negative concerns raised by students about time and energy, “It seems like I will be writing this forever,” “Do we have to do this twice a week, it’s boring,” “We should type it so editing is easier, all this writing is causing my
fingers to cramp,” “I don’t like writing,” Others seemed to reflect more frustration: “I really hate portfolios,” “How does a science lab unit end up in a portfolio?” “How come my Social Studies report is in my portfolio and why did it get a grade for grammar? – It’s Social Studies!” “I’m confused!” and “This is too much work.”

The high school teacher often discussed types of portfolio samples with other staff and students early in the year to avoid negative feelings. She believed a well-rounded portfolio showed student growth and achievement in all subject areas; therefore, she included samples of work that demonstrated a student’s understanding of a mathematical concept. One of her requirements was that the portfolio work sample showed the student’s mathematical problem solving and thinking process, not just answers.

**Student Summary.** When asked to summarize if students, as a group, appeared to enjoy working with portfolios, eight of the teachers (80%) indicated students, as a whole, seemed to enjoy portfolio assessment. One disagreed, saying her students really did not see the value in portfolios. She believed that the time and effort dedicated to creating the portfolios was not as effective as other teaching strategies she could have used. Another teacher indicated that some students liked portfolios while others did not.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of an assessment is to gather accurate data on student performance, enabling educators to effectively make decisions for academic instruction (Peterson & Neill, 1999). The purpose of this present study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of one form of alternate assessments – the portfolio assessment. The research information was gathered through interviews with ten teachers located in Wisconsin.

Discussion of the Findings

Teacher perceptions of their knowledge of student portfolios. The results showed that most teachers (90%) indicated they were adequately prepared and qualified to develop and implement student portfolios as an alternate assessment. During the interviews, all teachers provided an accurate definition of portfolio assessment. Some definitions were very brief; others were very detailed to describe portfolios as an educational tool and an alternate form of assessment. Their understanding of portfolios clearly indicated they were knowledgeable of the development process and the complexities of its implementation and assessment. Teachers were also knowledgeable on portfolio types indicating a stronger preference for the process portfolio over the product portfolio as the process portfolios promoted students' academic growth. All teachers greatly appreciated their colleagues who offered inspiration and support to provide a network where novice teachers could ask questions, gather samples, or brainstorm for ideas to solve problems. To enhance their knowledge, 80% of the teachers had participated in one or more portfolio trainings, including college courses. They also read journal articles and books
on portfolio development, implementation, and assessment to enrich their knowledge. The researcher believed teacher training and support system were key components for teachers who perceive themselves as competent personnel for using portfolio assessment.

**Teacher perceptions of portfolio development and implementation.** Nine of the ten teachers (90%) reported they successfully developed and implemented portfolios into their classrooms. Teachers discussed the transition from the traditional teaching techniques to portfolio implementation as a relatively smooth process, indicating staff support and teacher adaptability as major reasons for success. Only one teacher indicated the transition to portfolios was rocky, as she struggled with conflicts in her curriculum that made her teaching jump around, and she lost valuable teaching time.

Teachers talked eagerly about designing and implementing portfolios, especially to support students who had previously been unsuccessful in standardized testing. This finding was consistent with the studies by Kim (2004), Poel (1998) and Swartz (1999). In these research studies, teachers believed that portfolios were multidimensional and easily adapted to different grade levels to meet students varying abilities and motivational levels. This flexibility allowed teachers to tailor instruction for individual students or to reinforce a specific skill to meet the goals and objectives directed by a student’s IEP. In the present study, several teachers indicated they believed portfolios could be used to assist in screening students or helping students to meet their IEP goals. However, only two had observed portfolios being reviewed and discussed at a student’s IEP meeting. Similar to Denham and Lahm’s study (2001) where teachers reported student portfolios were included in IEP goals and objectives, one teacher in the present study reported her portfolio assessment was designed to track the academic progress or educational delays.
of young students and offer assistance through interventions at an early age. The
intention, as indicated by teachers in both past and present studies, was to support the
students learning through portfolio use.

There are some concerns about portfolio development and implementation, and
time was the greatest obstacle. Similar comments have been found in Dudley’s study
(2000), in which teachers found grading to be a complex and time consuming task. Kim
(2004) summarized five studies to indicate the amount of time required to evaluate
portfolios, train students and other professionals to be involved in portfolio
implementation, and communicate with students in discussing their work on portfolios. It
appears nearly all teachers indicated the biggest drawback of portfolio use was the vast
amount of time that must be dedicated for successfully developing, implementing, and
grading portfolios. This researcher believes if educators developed a portfolio system that
was more time efficient it would supplant the existing system.

In the present study, half of the teachers (50%) reported different strategies for
dealing with grading, but all (100%) indicated the size and quantity of portfolios made
their grading extremely challenging. In addition, organization and storage were two other
concerns reported by the teachers. Organization of teacher’s instruction through
portfolios is critical for the process to operate smoothly. Portfolios assisted some
disorganized students in learning organizational skills, but many students continued to
struggle with gathering the required components. Storage was another obstacle when
teaching and assessing using student portfolios in a classroom with limited space. Cost
was also mentioned by a majority of the teachers indicating they had invested money for
items without reimbursement from the school budget. These concerns were also indicated
in Poel's (1999) study. Some issues, such as portfolios' cost, can be dealt with through
the school budget. Other concerns, such as adequate room to store portfolios and
portfolio size, are more complex issues to solve in schools with limited space. Several
teachers being interviewed mentioned that they were exploring electronic portfolios as a
possible solution to the storage problem. Teachers in Poel's study (1998) indicated
computer technology was being used to document student portfolios, which eliminated
the storage problem. In Furger's study (2002), part of the portfolio components were
documented on videotapes.

*Teacher perceptions of portfolios as an educational tool influencing instructional practices.* Teachers reported multiple benefits when instructing students through
portfolios. Student pride became evident for many teachers as students began to share
their finished portfolio entries with peers. Forty percent of the participating teachers
indicated a noticed improvement in students' self-esteem when displaying pride in their
accomplishments.

Because of self-reflections, students could compare portfolio pieces, recognize
faults in their work, and set goals for future projects. This ownership became evident as
students placed value on the portfolio to collect their work samples that were created
through hard work and energy. More than half the teachers reported student improvement
and growth. Ownership was again reflected in students learning to organize their work.
For many students, learning how to organize their work was especially challenging. Once
this was accomplished, their academics improved.

An on-going portfolio evaluation allowed teachers to assess students and modify
instruction to meet students' needs. This process also allowed teachers to constantly
adapt portfolio requirements to help students receive the most benefit from instruction.

Instructional adaptation incorporating materials from texts or portfolio programs was common practice for the teachers.

Also, the amount of time teachers spent preparing and implementing portfolios was reported in all areas of portfolio assessment as one of the top concerns. Most teachers indicated allowing students adequate time to work on portfolios required much teachers' effort and time.

Student frustration over editing or revising portfolio items was indicated by a majority of teachers. Another catalyst for student frustration was the necessity to continually keep portfolio work organized.

Teachers indicated a concern about the amount of time dedicated to preparing and implementing portfolios in comparison to the limited number of portfolios actually reviewed as alternate assessments to determine a student’s proficiency. While almost all teachers indicated that portfolios were a valid form of assessment, a few teachers reported that working with an entire class to create portfolios is overwhelming when only a limited number of students rely on the portfolio to prove proficiency.

*Teacher perceptions of the legitimacy of portfolios as an alternative assessment.* Eighty percent of the teachers indicated they believe portfolio assessment was an accurate measure of student proficiency. All teachers indicated portfolio assessment was a more valid form of assessing students with special needs than the standardized tests. The important issue related to a valid portfolio was to make sure all samples represent a student’s progress, and were accurately assessed by qualified educators.
Teacher perceptions of student roles and responsibilities in developing portfolios.

Although student roles and responsibilities varied with teachers, the main expectations were similar. Students were expected to demonstrate their ownership, which promoted their self-monitoring, self-management, and self-reflection. Over half the teachers involved students in selecting pieces to enter into their portfolio, and required self-reflections to accompany portfolio entries. Teachers indicated they spent time at the beginning of the year to teach the portfolio procedures and expectations. The procedures varied with different teachers, but most teachers used guidelines, rubrics, or samples to assist students. The goal was to promote students’ self-motivation and self-direction during the portfolio process.

Various studies in past years indicated the importance of student self-evaluation and reflection to help them discover what they know and inform teachers and parents about their learning. For example, Swartz (1999) cited Politano and Davies’ study in 1994 discussing self-evaluation as a means of helping develop pride in student accomplishment and guiding students in setting new goals that are realistic and attainable. Dudley (2001) stated a portfolio as a powerful tool to save student writings, and allow students to revisit their work with reflections for improving it during each visit.

Concerns raised by teachers were student complaints regarding the amount of writing required in the portfolio assessment. Another student complaint was frustration over the amount of time spent to edit and revise their work. For example, some students might have struggled with completing specific portfolio requirements while others were required to work on a topic they disliked. Despite some negative comments from students, most teachers (80%) indicated that students enjoyed working with portfolios.
Limitations and Recommendations

There are some limitations in this study. First, the results are from self-reported responses. The researcher assumed that the participant responses to the interview questions were honest, relative to their professional judgment. Different research methods, such as experimental design and case analysis, may be considered in addition to self-reported interviews. Additionally, research on the perceptions of caseworkers, administrators, and parents on portfolio implementation and assessment may also be needed to explore different views and opinions. Other limitations include the brief duration of the study and limited number of teacher participants available for data collection. In the present study, only ten teachers were interviewed. To produce more reliable data, the size of the sample group of teacher participants could be increased and the geographic location of the samples interviewed could be expanded to include other regions of the United States.

Further studies may be needed to examine teacher perceptions of portfolio assessments. For example, one study could compare teacher responses on current perceptions of portfolio assessment with responses from teachers in past studies to determine if perceptions have changed in regard to the strengths and weaknesses.

The portfolio assessment focuses on learning outcomes and teaches students that the process of learning is to be valued, not just the products of learning. The flexibility of portfolios allows teachers to evaluate students continuously and tailor instruction to meet the needs of all students. This assessment system also encourages students to become active participants in their education and commitment to learning. It is my hope that the results of this study will add information to the alternate assessment practice.
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Portfolio Issues written for Prince George’s County Public Schools


APPENDIX A

Research Cover Letter and Consent Form
Dear Colleague:

I am a graduate student in the Special Education Department at Rowan University. I will be conducting a research project under the supervision of Dr. Joy Xin as part of my master’s thesis concerning portfolio assessment. The goal of the study is to gather data through interviews to determine teacher perceptions regarding the use of the portfolio assessment as an alternative to standardized testing for evaluating students especially students with special needs.

I am recruiting participants who have used or are using portfolios as an alternate assessment in the classroom. Interviews can be conducted through email, telephone, or in person. I understand your time is valuable, and I greatly appreciate your consideration of my request. Your participation is critical for me to gather the necessary data needed to carry out this research project. Notes will be taken in writing at the time of the interview and the session will be tape recorded with the permission of the participant.

All necessary precautions will be taken to ensure complete confidentiality. Your name will not appear in the study. All data will be combined, and no one will be identified from the data. At the conclusion of the study, a summary of the group results will be made available to all interested participants.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact:

Diane Caldwell  
Master of Arts Candidate in Special Education  
435 Chestnut Street  
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dianecaldwell@earthlink.net

Dr. Joy Xin  
Professor  
Department of Special Education  
Rowan University  
(856) 256-4734  
Xin@rowan.edu

Respectfully,

Diane Caldwell

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Consent Form

I, (print name) ____________________________, have been informed about the research study being conducted by Diane Caldwell, a graduate student in the Special Education Department at Rowan University. By completing and returning this form I agree to participate in this study with Diane Caldwell. I realize that the information I provide will be confidential and used for educational purposes.

I would prefer an interview by _____email _____telephone ____ in person. My contact information is:

__________________________________________

(Signature) (Date)
APPENDIX B

Research Demographic Form
Teacher’s Survey on Student Portfolios

Operational Definitions:

1. A Student Portfolio is a collection of the students work gathered over time indicating current and past performance levels. It helps the viewer gain some insight into the student as a learner.

2. Portfolio Assessment is using the portfolio as a tool to assess the student and make determinations on learning outcomes. It can also provide information to for administrative decisions such as assisting the IEP team in evaluating a student’s present level of performance and to set logical and rational goals and objectives.

3. Authentic Assessment is the process of observing, recording, and documenting what a student can do and how they do it as a basis for making educational decisions.

Section I: Demographic Information

1. Current Age:

   20 – 29 _____ 30 – 39 _____ 40 – 49 _____ 50 – 59 _____ 60 – 60 _____ 70+ _____

2. Gender: Female __________ Male __________

3. Number of years teaching: __________

4. Number of years using a portfolio assessment: __________

5. Current grade level of teaching (Check all that apply)
   Pre-K ____ Primary (K-3) ____ Intermediate (4-6) ____ Junior High (7-8) ____ High (9-12) ____

6. Highest educational degree:
   Bachelor’s degree ____ Master’s degree ____ Doctoral degree ____

7. Degree Field:
   • Early Childhood N – 3 ______ Special Education: ______
   • Elementary Education ______ Secondary Education ______

8. Other educational certifications: ____________________________________________

9. Non-education related degrees: ____________________________________________
APPENDIX C

Research Interview Questions
Teacher Perceptions on Portfolio Assessment

This interview is being conducted for scholarly research with the intention of publication at Rowan University. All responses will be confidential. No statements or comments will be attributed directly to the source from which they came. Interviewees are free to omit questions they are uncomfortable answering or do not pertain to them; and to ask for clarification as needed. For the sake of accuracy, oral interviews will be tape recorded, in addition to the researcher’s written notes. For educators answering questions independently please contact the researcher by telephone at (856) 875-1767 or email at dianecaldwell@earthlink.net with any questions or concerns.

I. Teacher’s Knowledge of Portfolios

1. How qualified do you feel to use student portfolios as a teaching tool and as a means of assessment? Why? (Experience level: Novice / Adequate / Expert)

2. What is your definition of student portfolio assessment? Does your portfolio use concur with your definition?

3. What type of portfolio training have you received? Was your training adequate to prepare you for using student portfolios?

4. Have you collaborated with other teachers/educators to develop student portfolios?

5. Which types of portfolios are you familiar with? Which of these have you used?

II. Pros and Cons of Developing and Implementing Portfolios

1. Was using student portfolios an administrative or individual choice? Who determined the type and content of the portfolios?

2. Was the developmental phase relatively uncomplicated and straightforward or a complex process?

3. Are your students capable of taking ownership and responsibility of their individual portfolio development? What are your expectations and limitations?

4. What positive outcomes have you experienced or witnessed related to developing and implementing student portfolios? 
   IE: Student Self-reflections, student participation in content selection.

5. What drawbacks have you experienced or witnessed related to developing and implementing student portfolios?
   IE: Time, organization, student reflections, complexity, grading.
III. Effectiveness as an educational tool and influence on instructional practices

1. Do you use a rubric for portfolio grading and to check individual pieces or the entire portfolio?

2. Do you think using portfolios provides an opportunity to communicate with your students about their progress?

3. Has portfolio assessment been difficult to integrate into your instruction?

4. Has working with portfolios affected your teaching by either improving it or diminishing it?

5. What comments have you heard other educators make in reference to student portfolios?

IV. Pros/Cons of portfolio legitimacy as an alternate assessment

1. To what degree do you feel it is important that all students, including students with special needs, be assessed for achievement?

2. Do you think that portfolio assessment is a more valuable assessment than traditional standardized tests for students with disabilities? Why or why not?

3. Is portfolio assessment a valid means of assessment for students who do not pass traditional standardized tests? Should it be used as an alternate assessment to determine proficiency for both general and special education students?

4. Do you believe that portfolio assessment can help IEP teams to appropriately set goals and objectives for students? Have you ever used, or seen a portfolio used, in an IEP meeting?

5. How accurately do you think portfolio assessment measures your students’ ability?

6. Where do you see student portfolios as an alternate assessment in the future? Do you see another type of alternate assessment emerging in place of portfolios?

V. Student Roles and Responsibilities of Developing Portfolios.

1. Have your students included reflective pieces on the work in their portfolio?

2. Have your students selected pieces to revisit for additional work or evaluation?

3. Have your students been involved in any other way in the development or implementation of their portfolios?

4. Do you believe students enjoy working with portfolios?

5. What comments, positive or negative, have you heard students make regarding portfolio use.
APPENDIX D

Description of P-5 Portfolio Schools
P-5 Program Celebrates
Its Twentieth Year

Targeting State Resources to Students Most in Need

In 1986-87, the State of Wisconsin awarded 14 Milwaukee public elementary schools a total of $2.83 million to supplement existing programs to help meet the needs of low achieving students. In 1989-90, the appropriation to the Milwaukee Public Schools was increased to $3.4 million, which allowed funding of P-5 services to three more elementary schools. In 1990-91, the P-5 appropriation rose to $3.8 million, permitting the addition of two more MPS schools. Then, in 1991-92, the P-5 allocation increased once again to $4.2 million, allowing funding for yet two more MPS schools. A total of 20 MPS schools were served by the P-5 program in 2004-05, representing nearly 20% of all elementary schools in the Milwaukee school district. Twenty-Seventh Street school, a longtime participant in the P-5 program, closed as a regular education facility effective 2001-02. In 2005-06, Palmer school merged with Garfield school to form a new school, Carver Academy. Carver Academy is a P-5 school.

For years 1992-93, 1993-94 and 1994-95, the annual P-5 appropriation to MPS for the 21 schools enrolled in the program remained at $4.2 million. The P-5 allocation to MPS rose slightly to $4.3 million in 1995-96 and 1996-97. In 1997-98, the amount rose to $4.5 million, a funding level that remained in effect through 1998-99. In 1999-00 and 2000-01 a total of $4,695,000 was appropriated for the P-5 Program. In 2001-02, $4,595,811 was appropriated for the P-5 Program, and in 2002-03 a total of $4,498,000 was allocated. For 2003-04, $4,401,031 was budgeted, and in 2004-05 $4,367,749 was allocated. In 2005-06, $4,185,264 was budgeted.

Statewide there were 38 elementary schools in four urban school districts involved in the program in 2005-06. The three other urban districts in the P-5 program are Beloit, Kenosha and Racine.

P-5 Program Components and Evaluation

Elementary schools interested in enrolling in the program have developed proposals to serve pupils aged four through grade five. State criteria used to determine school eligibility for P-5 funding are based primarily upon the numbers of economically disadvantaged students enrolled and the potential to serve student academic needs.

P-5 schools employ a wide range of teaching approaches and special programs and activities to meet the educational and social needs of disadvantaged students. There is a set of standard program features, which are employed by all schools involved in the P-5 program, as well as a group of special features unique to each school’s focus.

2005-06 P-5 Evaluation Report

This evaluation of the P-5 Program is in three sections:

Section I: An evaluation of P-5 school performance for 2005-06 with comparable data and trend line analysis for the last three years.

Section II: A three-year evaluation for two MPS P-5 schools (Green Bay Avenue and Bethune Academy) completing their three-year cycle in 2005-06.

Section III: A school-by-school description of student achievement data.
P-5 Student and School Demographics

Collectively, the twenty P-5 schools operating in 2005-06 differ from other elementary schools in the district in terms of certain student enrollment and demographic characteristics. As a group, P-5 schools have proportionately more minority and poor students, compared to the district as a whole. They also have higher levels of student turnover, from year to year and during the school year. Charts 1, 2 and 3 detail certain student enrollment, demographic and outcome characteristics of P-5 schools over the last three years compared to the district as a whole.

Enrollment:
As a group, the 20 P-5 schools had an enrollment of 9,017 in 2005-06, accounting for 18% of all MPS elementary enrollment. Like the district as a whole, the number of pupils enrolled in P-5 schools declined in 2005-06 compared to the year before. A drop in the number of new births 10 to 15 years earlier is primarily responsible. Chart 1 shows that 14 of the 19 P-S schools (excluding the closed Palmer and new Carver Academy) experienced a decline in pupil enrollment in 2005-06 from the year before. Four schools had declines of 15% or more (Franklin LaFollette, Lee, Wheatley). Two other schools (Bethune Academy and Kagel) had increases of 15% or more. Fourteen of the 20 P-S schools have recently become, or soon will be full K-8 schools. Auer, Clarke, Holmes, Hopkins, Keeffe, King, LaFollette, Lee, Vieau and Westside Academy are now full K-8 schools. Bethune Academy, Franklin and Green Bay will become full K-8 schools in 2008-09. In 2005-06 Palmer merged with another elementary school (Garfield). The new school is called Carver Academy. Six P-5 schools remain traditional K-5 elementary schools (Kagel, Kilbourn, Pierce, Riley, Siefert and Wheatley).

Chart 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>2005-06</th>
<th>% Change from 04-05</th>
<th>Percent Disability</th>
<th>Percent ELL</th>
<th>Percent Female</th>
<th>Percent Male</th>
<th>Percent Asian</th>
<th>Percent Hispanic</th>
<th>Percent African Amer.</th>
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<td>374</td>
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<td>51.3%</td>
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</table>

Ethnicity – Students with Disabilities – English Language Learners (ELL):
As a group, about 98% of all students in P-5 schools were minority in 2005-06, a larger percentage than for the district (86%). African Americans remain the largest ethnic group and account for about 76% of all students enrolled in P-5 schools. However, the fastest growing pupil group is Hispanics, comprising 19% of all students enrolled in P-5 schools in 2005-06. Hispanics are the dominant ethnic group in four schools (Kagel, Pierce, Riley and Vieau). These schools also have large percentages of students identified as English Language Learners (+27%). A larger percentage of students enrolled in P-5 schools are identified with disabilities, than for the district, with 8 schools having percentages over 20%. 
Free and Reduced Lunch:
Proportionately more students are eligible for free and reduced lunch in P-5 schools than for the district as a whole. Chart 2 shows that an average of nearly 91% of pupils enrolled in P-5 schools received free and reduced lunch in 2005-06, compared to 77% for the district. Fourteen of the 20 P-5 schools in 2005-06 have free/reduced lunch rates of over 90%. Eight of the 15 MPS elementary schools with the highest poverty rates are P-5 schools.

Chart 2
Student Demographics of P-5 Schools

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<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Percent Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Percent Student Mobility</th>
<th>Percent Student Stability</th>
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<td>71.5%</td>
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<td>68.1%</td>
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Mobility:
Student mobility (i.e. the percentage of students entering a new school within a school year) is higher for P-5 schools than it is for the district as a whole in 2005-06 (18.8% vs. 15.6%). Chart 2. However, there is a wide difference among P-5 schools, from 10% or less in three schools (King, Siefert and Vieau) to more than 25% in four other P-5 schools (Franklin, Green Bay, LaFollette and Bethune Academy). Student mobility declined in nine of the 19 P-5 schools in 2005-06 compared to the year before, and rose in ten others.

Stability:
The stability rate (Chart 2) is defined as the percentage of students who enroll in the school two consecutive years (excluding the top outgoing grade and the lowest incoming grade). The collective student stability rate for P-5 schools in 2005-06 is lower than the overall district rate (65.7% vs. 68.1%). The average stability rate for P-5 schools has risen slightly over the last two years, while it has generally declined for the district as a whole. Stability rates decreased in eight P-5 schools compared to the year before, and rose in 11 others. Stability rates varied widely among P-5 schools in 2005-06, from less than 12% in five schools (Auer, Franklin, Green Bay, Hopkins and LaFollette) to 75% or more in two other P-5 schools (Riley and Vieau). The stability rate rose by 10 percentage points or more in two P-5 schools in 2005-06 compared to the year before (Keefe and Wheatley).
Retentions:
The student retention rate is the percentage of students retained in the same grade from one year to the next, generally for academic reasons. Chart 3 shows that the average P-5 school retention rate for 2005-06 is higher than for the district as a whole (3.7% vs. 2.9%). The retention rate rose for eleven schools and declined in the eight others (excluding Palmer and Carver Academy). There was a wide difference in retention rates from 5% or more in five schools (Carver Academy, Clarke, Green Bay, Keefe and Pierce), to 2% or less in four others (Auer Avenue, Bethune Academy, Holmes and Hopkins).

Suspensions:
Students are suspended (out of school) for a variety of reasons, most often for behavioral infractions. The average P-5 school suspension rate in 2005-06 is more than twice the district rate (24.8% vs. 11.2%), Chart 3. As more P-5 schools add upper grades (to be K-8 schools), generally older age students generate more suspensions. The student suspension rate rose in 17 of the 19 P-5 schools in 2005-06 compared to the previous year and declined in only two others. Suspension rates vary greatly, from 5% or less in five schools (Clarke, King, Pierce and Vieau) to more than 40% in four others (Auer, Carver Academy, Franklin, LaFollette). Suspension rates rose significantly in 2005-06 over the year before in Auer, Franklin, Kilbourn and Westside Academy.

Truancies:
A truant is defined by the state as a student who is absent from school without an acceptable excuse for part or all of 5 or more days on which school is held per semester. The state’s threshold for what is deemed a “truant” student is set quite high, as a pupil with the minimum number of unexcused absences can still have a yearly attendance rate of 96%. Overall, the average truancy rate for P-5 schools is more than twice the district rate (55.9% vs. 24.8%), Chart 3. Individually, truancy rates rose in 18 of the 19 P-5 schools. Twelve schools had increases of more than 20 percentage points in their truancy rates compared to the year before.

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Assessing Progress in P-5 Schools

P-5 Program Criteria

State legislation establishing the P-5 program identifies a set of criteria that school districts must meet to be eligible for P-5 funding. These criteria include:

- Limiting class size to a maximum ratio of 25 students to one teacher per class.
- Testing pupils in grades 3, 4 and 5 in reading, mathematics and language.
- Implementing a multi-disciplinary teaching approach.
- Structuring educational experiences for four-year olds.
- Preparing written evaluations of staff members.
- Providing staff development.
- Establishing a council of parents, community leaders and staff members.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and MPS personnel monitors school district implementation of these standard features. Over the years many P-5 schools have shown some achievement gains and all schools continue to provide standard program components required by P-5 legislation.

Each MPS P-5 school limits class size to no more than 25 students, has established and presently operates school councils, implements a multi-disciplinary team approach, provides for staff development, carries out comprehensive plans to ensure parental involvement and provides for full staff evaluations. All P-5 schools provide four-year old kindergarten programs and use portfolios at all levels and several offer K3 and Headstart programs as well.

Unique Features

The 2005-06 MPS Evaluation Report details the P-5 plans of each of the 20 elementary schools enrolled in the program (Section III), including their unique program features. P-5 funding supports a variety of special education and school support activities. Most schools use their P-5 funds to hire additional teachers and aides to augment educational programs in school, in such academic areas as reading, writing, math, science and library-media.

Many schools also dedicate P-5 resources to hiring full or part-time coordinators. Several schools also apply some P-5 funds to support additional staff in-service, counseling and diagnostic services, as well as a variety of special programs and initiatives linked to curriculum and student learning in the schools.
APPENDIX E

Six-Traits of Writing Portfolio Samples

Six-Trait Assessment Rubric for Beginning Writers
The Young Writer’s Guide
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 – Experimenting</th>
<th>2 – Emerging</th>
<th>3 – Developing</th>
<th>4 – Capable</th>
<th>5 – Experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Uses scribbles for writing&lt;br&gt;– Dictates labels or a story&lt;br&gt;– Shapes that look like letters&lt;br&gt;– Line forms that imitate text&lt;br&gt;– Writes letters randomly</td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Some recognizable words present&lt;br&gt;– Label pictures&lt;br&gt;– Uses drawings that show detail&lt;br&gt;– Pictures are supported by some words</td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Attempts a story or to make a point&lt;br&gt;– Illustration supports the writing&lt;br&gt;– Meaning of the general idea is recognizable/understandable&lt;br&gt;– Some ideas clear but some are still fuzzy</td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Writing tells a story or makes a point&lt;br&gt;– Illustration (if present) enhances the writing&lt;br&gt;– Idea is generally on topic&lt;br&gt;– Details are present but not developed (lists)</td>
<td><strong>Ideas</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Presents a fresh/original idea&lt;br&gt;– Topic is narrowed and focused&lt;br&gt;– Develops one clear, main idea&lt;br&gt;– Uses interesting, important details for support&lt;br&gt;– Writer understands topic well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Ability to order or group not yet present&lt;br&gt;– No sense of beginning or end&lt;br&gt;– Connections between idea are confusing</td>
<td><strong>Organization</strong>&lt;br&gt;– No title (if requested)&lt;br&gt;– Experiments with beginnings&lt;br&gt;– Begins to group like words/pictures&lt;br&gt;– Transitions or evidence of sequencing are haphazard</td>
<td><strong>Organization</strong>&lt;br&gt;– A title is present (if requested)&lt;br&gt;– Limited transitions present&lt;br&gt;– Beginning but no ending except “The End”&lt;br&gt;– Attempts at sequencing and transitions</td>
<td><strong>Organization</strong>&lt;br&gt;– An appropriate title is present (if requested)&lt;br&gt;– Attempts transitions from sentence to sentence&lt;br&gt;– Beginning works well and attempts an ending&lt;br&gt;– Logical sequencing&lt;br&gt;– Key ideas begin to surface</td>
<td><strong>Organization</strong>&lt;br&gt;– An original title is present (if requested)&lt;br&gt;– Transitions connect main ideas&lt;br&gt;– The opening attracts&lt;br&gt;– An effective ending is tried&lt;br&gt;– Easy to follow&lt;br&gt;– Important ideas stand out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Communicates feelings with size, color, shape, line in drawing or letter imitation&lt;br&gt;– Work is similar to everyone else’s&lt;br&gt;– Unclear response to task&lt;br&gt;– Awareness of audience not present</td>
<td><strong>Voice</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Hints of voice present in words and phrases&lt;br&gt;– Looks different from most others&lt;br&gt;– Energy/mood is present&lt;br&gt;– Treatment of topic predictable&lt;br&gt;– Audience is fuzzy – could be anybody, anywhere</td>
<td><strong>Voice</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Expresses some predictable feelings&lt;br&gt;– Moments of individual sparkle, but then hides&lt;br&gt;– Repetition of familiar ideas reduces energy&lt;br&gt;– Awareness that the writing will be read by someone else&lt;br&gt;– Reader has limited connection to writer</td>
<td><strong>Voice</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Writing is individual and expressive&lt;br&gt;– Individual perspective becomes evident&lt;br&gt;– Personal treatment of a standard topic&lt;br&gt;– Writes to convey a story or idea to the reader&lt;br&gt;– Attempts non-standard point of view</td>
<td><strong>Voice</strong>&lt;br&gt;– Uses text to elicit a variety of emotions&lt;br&gt;– Takes some risks to say more than what is expected&lt;br&gt;– Point of view is evident&lt;br&gt;– Writes with a clear sense of audience&lt;br&gt;– Cares deeply about the topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**6-Trait Assessment for Beginning Writers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1 – Experimenting</th>
<th>2 – Emerging</th>
<th>3 – Developing</th>
<th>4 – Capable</th>
<th>5 – Experienced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Choice</strong></td>
<td>_ Writes letters in strings_</td>
<td>_ Recognizable words_</td>
<td>_ General or ordinary words_</td>
<td>_ Uses favorite words correctly_</td>
<td>_ Everyday words used well_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Imitates word patterns_</td>
<td>_ Environmental words used correctly_</td>
<td>_ Attempts new words but they don’t always fit_</td>
<td>_ Experiments with new and different words with some success_</td>
<td>_ Precise, accurate, fresh, original words_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Pictures stand for words and phrases_</td>
<td>_ Attempts at phrases_</td>
<td>_ Relies on slang, clichés, or repetition_</td>
<td>_ Attempts to choose words for specificity_</td>
<td>_ Creates vivid images in a natural way_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Copies environmental print_</td>
<td>_ Functional language_</td>
<td>_ Attempts to use descriptive words to create images_</td>
<td>_ Attempts at figurative language_</td>
<td>_ Avoids repetition, clichés or vague language_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence Fluency</strong></td>
<td>_ Mimics letters and words across the page_</td>
<td>_ Strings words together into phrases_</td>
<td>_ Uses simple sentences_</td>
<td>_ Simple and compound sentences present and effective_</td>
<td>_ Attempts at sentence variety_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Words stand along_</td>
<td>_ Attempts simple sentences_</td>
<td>_ Sentences tend to begin the same_</td>
<td>_ Attempts complex sentences_</td>
<td>_ Sentence structure is correct and creative_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Patterns for sentences not in evidence_</td>
<td>_ Short, repetitive sentence patterns_</td>
<td>_ Experiments with other sentence patterns_</td>
<td>_ Not all sentences begin the same_</td>
<td>_ Variety of sentence beginnings_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Sentence sense not yet present_</td>
<td>_ Dialogue present but not understandable_</td>
<td>_ Reader may have to reread to follow the meaning_</td>
<td>_ Sections of writing have rhythm and flow_</td>
<td>_ Natural rhythm, cadence and flow_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventions</strong></td>
<td>_ Writes letter strings (pre-phonetic: dmRxzz) Attempts to create standard letters_</td>
<td>_ Attempts semi-phonetic spelling (MTR, UM, etc.)_</td>
<td>_ Uses semi-phonetic spelling (MOSTR,HUMN,KLOSD, etc.) on personal words_</td>
<td>_ High frequency words are spelled correctly and very close on other words_</td>
<td>_ Consistently uses sentence variety_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Attempts spacing of words, letters, symbols or pictures_</td>
<td>_ Uses mixed upper and lower case letters_</td>
<td>_ Spelling of high frequency words still spotty_</td>
<td>_ Capitals used for obvious proper nouns as well as sentence beginnings_</td>
<td>_ Sentence structure is correct and creative_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Attempts to write left or right_</td>
<td>_ Uses spaces between letters and words_</td>
<td>_ Uses capitals at the beginning of sentences_</td>
<td>_ Basic punctuation is used correctly and/or creatively_</td>
<td>_ Variety of sentence beginnings_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Attempts to write top/down_</td>
<td>_ Consistently writes left to right_</td>
<td>_ Usually uses end punctuation correctly (.)? _</td>
<td>_ Indents consistently to show paragraphs_</td>
<td>_ Natural rhythm, cadence and flow_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>_ Punctuation, capitalization, etc. no making sense, yet Student interpretation needed to understand text/pictures_</td>
<td>_ Consistently makes effective use of top to bottom spacing_</td>
<td>_ Experiments with other punctuation_</td>
<td>_ Show control over standard grammar_</td>
<td>_ High frequency words are spelled correctly and very close on other words_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_ Random punctuation_ _ Nonstandard grammar is common_</td>
<td>_ Long paper may be written as one paragraph_</td>
<td>_ Attempts standard grammar_</td>
<td>_ Capitals used for obvious proper nouns as well as sentence beginnings_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_ Basic punctuation is used correctly and/or creatively_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_ Indents consistently to show paragraphs_</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>_ Show control over standard grammar_</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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My Writing
The Young Writer’s Guide

Ready to share!

On my way...

Just beginning...
Ideas
* Awareness of details
* Ability to see what others miss
* Knowing what’s most important or interesting
* A good sense of the “main point” or “main storyline”

Ask yourself these questions –
* What is my message?
* Is my message clear?
* Do I have enough information?

Organization
* Sense of sequence
* Ability to organize and group
* Sense of beginning
* Sense of ending

Ask yourself these questions –
* How does my paper begin?
* Did I tell things in order?
* What is the most important thing in my paper?
* How does my paper end?

Voice
* Feelings
* Enthusiasm for writing
* Individuality
* Passion

Ask yourself these questions –
* Do I really like this paper?
* Does it sound like me?
* How do I want my reader to feel?
* My favorite part is _________?
Word Choice
* Awareness of language
* Awareness that there are different ways to say things
* Love of favorite words

Ask yourself these questions –
* Have I used some words I love?
* Can my reader tell what my words mean?
* Did I use any new words?
* What is my favorite word in this paper?

Sentence Fluency
* An ear for the language
* A love of rhythm
* Sentence sense

Ask yourself these questions –
* Did I use sentences?
* How many different sentences did I use?
* How many different way did I start my sentences?
* Did I use some short and some long sentences?

Conventions
* Awareness of writing conventions
* Willingness to experiment
* Patience to take a second look

Ask yourself these questions –
* Did I use sentences?
* How many different sentences did I use?
* How many different ways did I start my sentences?
* Did I use some short and some long sentences?
APPENDIX F

Portfolio Planner: A Step-by-Step Guide

Reflections on Writing: Primary 1
Reflections on Writing: Primary 2
Reflections on Writing: Upper-Grade 1
Reflections on Writing: Upper-Grade 2
Peer Editing Response: Primary
Peer Editing Response: Upper Grade
General Task Rubric
Performance Task Recording Sheet
Group Process Evaluation
Reflections on Writing—Primary

Make copies of this form for your students to use as they start the process of reflecting on their own writing. This form was designed for primary children and requires little writing. If your students need a more sophisticated form, use the one on page 31. Allow plenty of time to look over the work that is being reflected upon. When the form is completed, attach it to the work and include it in the student's portfolio.

Reflections on Writing

Name ___________________________ Date _______________

When I look back at the work I have done, I feel

![Smiley face]  ![Neutral face]  ![Sad face]

I have become better in writing sentences.
using capitals and periods.
spelling.
telling a story.
telling my ideas about something.

I am really proud of ___________________________

______________________________

The next time I write I will

______________________________

______________________________
This form is designed to introduce the idea of reflecting on a piece of one's own writing to the primary student. The ideas may be shared orally with the teacher who can fill in the information.

Reflecting on Writing

Name___________________________ Date ______________

Title of piece___________________________

I want this piece in my portfolio because__________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

My favorite sentence is __________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
Reflections on Writing—Upper Grade

Make copies of this form for your students to use as they start the process of reflecting on their own writing. (Although this form was designed for upper grade children, it could be used by younger children if the teacher reads it to them and briefly records their answers. Some primary students may, of course, be ready to use it alone.) Allow plenty of time to look over the work that is being reflected upon. When the form is completed, attach it to the work and include it in the student's portfolio.

Reflections on Writing

Name__________________________ Date ______________

When I look back at the work I have done, I feel ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

I have become better in/at ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

I am really proud of ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

The next time I write, I will work on ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
This form is designed to assist students in reflecting on pieces of their own writing. Since reflecting on a piece of writing means taking a thoughtful look at it, a form is not the ideal vehicle. Nevertheless, since some students find this process threatening, a form may introduce the idea without creating a stressful writing situation. There will be time enough later to require the reflective essay.

### Reflecting on Writing

Name _______________ Date _______________

Title of piece _______________

I chose this piece because _______________

Its special strengths are _______________

If I were going to redo this piece now, I would _______________
This form is designed to introduce the primary student to the idea of peer editing. Opinions can be given orally and written by the teacher.

Peer Editing Response

The piece I read was ________________________________

by ________________________________

The best thing about this piece is ________________________________

It would be even better if ________________________________

Peer Editor Date

01995 Teacher Created Materials, Inc.

#546 Portfolio Planner
This form is designed to facilitate and formalize the peer editing process. Peer editing can, of course, be done orally or in the form of a “quick write.” However, some students find it much easier to respond when prompted by a form.

**Peer Editing Response**

**Upper Grade**

The piece I read was ____________________________

by ____________________________

The best thing about this piece is ____________________________

If the writer wanted to change something, I would suggest ____________________________

__________________________

Peer Editor

__________________________

Date
This completed generalized task rubric could be used in its most generic form.

Generalized Task Rubric

6 Exemplary Achievement
- Demonstrates full understanding of major concepts
  - uses language to describe process or strategy
  - uses tools including paper and pencil, calculator, and mental math very effectively and when appropriate
  - reflects and generalizes about process and purpose

5 Commendable Achievement
- Demonstrates detailed understanding of major concepts
  - uses language, to a point, to describe process or strategy
  - uses tools, including paper and pencil, calculator, and mental math effectively
  - reflects and generalizes about process and purpose

4 Adequate Achievement
- Demonstrates a fundamental level of understanding the major concepts
  - uses language at the literal level
  - uses tools, including paper and pencil, calculator, and mental math, but depends too much on the calculator when mental math or pencil and paper would serve more effectively

3 Some Evidence of Achievement
- Demonstrates partial understanding of the major concepts
  - is stronger at "doing" than at describing with language
  - solves basic problems at the concrete level only

2 Limited Evidence of Achievement
- Demonstrates a lack of required skills to complete task
  - attempts task but does not recognize "incorrect" solutions
  - hesitates to discuss any aspect of situation

1 Minimal Evidence of Achievement
- Demonstrates a lack of understanding of task
  - Can combine objects to create a set, but makes no connection to symbols or generalized process

0 No participation or response
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing Perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-Making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-Solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error Identification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Describe the effectiveness of your group on the task.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What were the group's strengths?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. What frustrations did the group encounter?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Did all members of the group participate?

________________________________________________________________________

5. Did you listen to each other?

________________________________________________________________________

6. Name two ways in which your group could improve in order to be more effective on your next cooperative task.
   a.  

   ______________________________________________________________________

   b.  

   ______________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX G

How to Assess Student Work Samples

Portfolio Contents
Portfolio Checklist
Rubric for Assessing Work Performance
Content Reflection
Rubric for Evaluating My Portfolio
### Portfolio Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cover Page</td>
<td>Student creates a cover page complete with title, student name, and school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the Reader</td>
<td>Student writes a letter to the reader introducing the portfolio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>Student lists contents and corresponding page numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dividers</td>
<td>Student can include dividers at appropriate places throughout the portfolio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Pieces</td>
<td>Student and/or teacher choose(s) pieces of student work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Reflection</td>
<td>Student reflects on each content piece.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader Comment Page</td>
<td>This page invites comments and reflections from whomever reads the portfolio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Comment Page</td>
<td>This page invites comments by the teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Portfolio Checklist: Criteria for a Complete Portfolio

Name ____________________ Grade ___

My portfolio includes completion of work which is demonstrated by:

Title of assignment where this is shown:

Language Arts
- a major piece of writing
- improvement in writing
- a variety of writing types
- a variety of literature read
- interpretation of readings
- a long-range project that integrates skills
- a complete process of work including revision
- a piece of writing showing reflection

Social Studies
- an understanding of geography
- an understanding of current events
- an understanding of historical concepts
- connections between history and contemporary issues

Mathematics
- applications of math concepts in "real-life" situations

ESTABLISHING A PORTFOLIO PROGRAM 101
- an ability to solve problems
- using math through charts, graphs, etc.

**Science**
- use of data analysis
- using measurements
- using the scientific method
- understanding scientific concepts

**Physical Education**
- benefits of a healthy life style
- an understanding of athletic activities

**Electives/Unified Arts**
- creative/artistic expression
- interpretation
- use of multiple mediums including media, technology

**General**
- a project involving research
- an interdisciplinary unit
- evidence of working cooperatively
- contributions to the work of others
- effective use of resources
- use of technology
- contributions to community
- effective presentation to others
- reflection and evaluation of own work
# A Super Rubric for Assessing Work Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Awesome</th>
<th>Admirable</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Amateur</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Work</strong></td>
<td>Leaps tall buildings in a single bound</td>
<td>Jumps over medium buildings with a running start</td>
<td>Uses a ladder to climb over buildings</td>
<td>Trips when stepping up to curbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Productivity</strong></td>
<td>Is faster than a speeding bullet</td>
<td>Is as fast as a speeding bullet if there's a good tailwind</td>
<td>Can arrive at the same time as the bullet if given a head start</td>
<td>Can beat a water pistol nine times out of ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to Take on Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>More powerful than a locomotive</td>
<td>More powerful than a bus</td>
<td>Can push a stalled car</td>
<td>Needs a jump start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability to Perceive Needs</strong></td>
<td>Can see through walls</td>
<td>Can see through wallpaper</td>
<td>Can peek over the top of walls</td>
<td>Can see through a window if the shades are up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility</strong></td>
<td>Can bend steel with bare hands</td>
<td>Can bend lead with bare hands</td>
<td>Can bend aluminum foil with bare hands</td>
<td>Can break pencils if wearing protective gloves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Content Reflection

1. Why did you select this piece of work? Give at least two or three reasons.

2. What do you see as the strengths of this piece of work? Give at least two or three reasons.

3. What was particularly important to you while you were completing this piece of work?

4. What things did you struggle with while you were doing this work?

5. If you could work more on this, what would you do?

6. What were some of the reactions you received from those who looked at this piece of work?

7. How is this piece of work the same as or different from other projects you have done?
# A Rubric for Evaluating My Portfolio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY PORTFOLIO</th>
<th>LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is complete</td>
<td>3 2 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is organized</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains varied samples of written work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows evidence of using many resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows evidence of problem-solving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows evidence of decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows evidence of higher-level thinking skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes examples of both individual and group work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes self-reflective comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflects my enthusiasm for learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains many pieces that were not required or assigned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows evidence of what I have learned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays the pride I have in my work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows maximum effort to reach my educational goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is presented in a neat and orderly manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE:**

3 = excellent  
2 = good  
1 = needs improvement  
0 = missing