Portfolio Assessment
What is portfolio assessment?

- Purposeful collection of student work that has been selected and organized to show student learning progress (developmental portfolio) or to show samples of students' best work (showcase portfolio)

- Portfolio assessment can be used in addition to other assessments or the sole source of assessment.

- Some schools even use portfolio assessment as a basis for high school graduation!
What is the purpose of portfolios?

- To give students the opportunity to reflect on their growth over a period of time
- To use as a basis for assigning grades (based on effort)
- To use as a basis for communication with parents
- As placement/entrance requirements
What do portfolios contain?

Developmental Portfolio (or working portfolios)

- Samples of independent work (initial work compared to more current work)
- Evaluations by teacher, peer, self
- Reflections on the growth over a period of time (e.g., “I used to be unsure about punctuation, e.g., where does the comma really go?, but now, I feel comfortable in making decisions about punctuation, and I am right most of the time!”)
- May be used for instructional purposes and may include various stages of products, various drafts, etc.
What do portfolios contain?

Finished portfolio

- Samples of best independent work
- Evaluations by teacher, peer, self
- Samples organized according to some system (e.g., creative writing, scientific writing)
- Usually used to provide a summative evaluation and is standard format.
Different purposes of Portfolios

- All content in a portfolio must be linked to the learning objectives/outcomes
- In addition to learning objectives, there are many general purposes of portfolios:
  - Enhancing student learning (little emphasis on content, more emphasis on student reflection)
Different purposes of Portfolios (contd.)

- Assigning a grade (give clear guidelines to ensure that the portfolio consists of standard items)
- Displaying current achievement (pick the best complete work)
- Demonstrating progress (show changes over time, include various drafts)
- Showcasing student work (only best work)
- Documentation (showing work at variety of levels)
- Show finished work
- Show works in progress
Characteristics of portfolios used for instructional purposes

- Focus is on development of self-evaluation skills.
- Teacher and students must meet to discuss evaluations (teachers can get a good window into students’ understanding of their progress).
- In addition to improving instruction, the goal is to help student internalize criteria for excellence.
- Can be used for student-directed conferences with parents.
Characteristics of portfolios used for assessment purposes

- Focus is on evaluation of student work in its entirety and certifying accomplishment.
- Teacher should provide student with clear guidelines about content of portfolio and scoring criteria.
- If used to assess program goals, the content and organization of portfolios must be highly standardized.
Examples of portfolios for different subjects

- Science
  - Charts, graphs created
  - Projects, examples, posters
  - Lab reports
  - Research reports
  - Tests
  - Student reflections (either weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly)
Examples of portfolios for different subjects

- Math
  - Samples of problem solving
  - Written explanations of how to solve problems
  - Charts, graphs
  - Computer analyses conducted
  - Student reflections (either weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly)
Examples of portfolios for different subjects

- **English/Language Arts**
  - Reading log
  - Different types of writing
    - Poems
    - Essays
    - Letters
    - Vocabulary achievements
  - Tests
  - Book summaries/reports
  - Dramatizations, creative endings to stories
  - Student reflections (either weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly)
What should the reflections contain?

- Reflections should focus on:
  - What all have done in the past ______?
  - What have I learned in the past ______?
  - What do I need to learn next ______?

- Sometimes, you can give students additional guidelines – e.g., the elements of the learning objectives that they should address (organization, punctuation, coherence, etc.)
Guidelines for portfolio entries

Give students the

- Purpose of the portfolio
- Time period that it should span
- Name people who will have access to it
- Description/list of types of work to include
- If applicable, what criteria will be used to evaluate portfolio
Guidelines for portfolio entries (contd.)

- Ensure that you allow for flexibility (however, for summative/showcase portfolios, you might have to include strict guidelines for organization)
- Ensure that students have access to resources to construct portfolios (e.g., technology, materials)
- Ground rules for working independently or collaboratively
- Guidance on physical structure of portfolios
- How portfolios fit into their grades
Who decides what goes into a portfolio?

- The student choice is the primary determinant of entries in a portfolio. Teacher guides by giving a general structure to the portfolio. Student and teacher may be asked to explain why they selected each entry.
- Teacher may meet with student regularly to reflect on student growth. (S)he provides input, student reflects on growth, and they talk about agreements, disagreements on evaluations.
How do we decide what to include in the portfolio?

- Start with early works to provide a basis for comparison of later work
- Include a variety of works in each category
- Include works that reflect the learning objectives that would need to be taught
- Include works that address the criteria that may be used for judging the portfolio
- Works should be complex (assess many different elements) to enable reflections
How do we decide what to include in the portfolio?

- Entries should be selected by student
  - Because in selecting, student has to apply a higher level of understanding/thinking about his own learning
- Portfolio should be assessed using criteria developed ahead of time
Where should we store the portfolio?

- Usually, portfolios should be manageable (not serve as a collection of ALL of students’ work) and should be within reach of a student (preferably stored in the classroom).

- They should be referred to regularly – teacher should provide for time to place entries in portfolio.
How is a portfolio organized?

- It may be organized by concepts, skills, subjects, learning objectives... whatever seems appropriate.
- For example, in writing, it may be organized as different types of writing.
Evaluating entries in portfolio

- Teacher and student both independently provide evaluation of growth/learning.
- Entries in portfolio should be evaluated using standards from learning objectives.
How do we evaluate the portfolio?

- What is important for the students to have learned over 4 months (or 8 months, or 1 unit)?
- Based on what is important (comes from learning objectives), decide on elements of portfolio to evaluate.
- We can develop ratings for each element
How do we evaluate the portfolio?

• For example – scientific thinking can be rated on the following scale:
  
  4 = conclusions are based on hypotheses
guesses, hypotheses are set based on valid reasons
  
  3 = More than half the conclusions are based on hypotheses....
Analytical or Holistic?

- If it’s a developmental portfolio, use analytic rating scale
  - E.g., http://www.umes.edu/education/exhibit/docs/PORTFOLIO%20RUBRIC.doc

- If it’s a showcase portfolio, you can use holistic rating scale

No rating scale is perfect. No rubric is perfect. As you use these, you will continue to improve them.
In evaluating a portfolio, remember to:

- Share the rubric with students before they work on the portfolio
- Allow students to reflect on their portfolio, using the rubric
- Ensure that you have checks for biases (e.g., rate portfolio with another teacher)
- Rate portfolio without looking at student name
- When making major decisions based on evaluations, ensure that you use more than one rater and all raters are trained
In sum...

- Entries in portfolio must be selected by student.
- Entries are biased toward selecting the best work.
- Reflections are an important part of the portfolio.
- Criteria for evaluating portfolio must be shared with student beforehand.
- Portfolios can be an excellent communication tool between students and (a) teacher; (b) parents; (c) peers.