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ABSTRACT

The plan to implement a professional portfolio policy in the Seven Oaks School Division, Winnipeg, Canada, will be perceived and lived by teachers in various ways. Their experiences will be colored by their understandings of the theories behind the use of portfolios as an alternative form of evaluation, their interpretations of the change, and their reactions as they live through the conditions of implementation. In replacing a policy loosely modeled on principles of clinical supervision whereby administrators evaluate teachers every 3 years, with a policy of documentation of individual performance and improvement, the Board of Trustees recognizes that individual teacher development and improvement are the responsibility of the teacher. How teachers understand the new policy, its ramifications for changing contexts of teaching, and its theoretical foundations are being investigated by a portfolio research team chosen from interested teachers and administrators. Seven major themes emerged from discussions at an in-service where the new policy was explained to school representatives: process of implementation; professional growth; contribution to the profession; trust; collegiality; product; and ownership. Not only can portfolios demonstrate growth and development in technical aspects of writing and teaching, but they can also contribute to the development of self-evaluation and critical reflection. By changing the focus of evaluation from documentation and recording of performance to a process in which performance documents become a means to improve practice, the new policy places power in the hands of teachers. (Twenty-two references and an appendix describing the teacher evaluation program are attached.)

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**NEW DIRECTIONS IN PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT:**

**ASSESSING THE ASSESSORS**

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*"I think it is very important for professional people to evaluate their own practices in order to make them better. In other words, self evaluation is a necessary corollary of professionalism. The portfolio system is a terrific idea which enables us to act in a professional manner."*

*"I feel very negative about the portfolio and the statement of professional growth. Both make me feel very uncomfortable. I do not like tooting my own horn nor do I like others looking into my personal feelings. Do we need to prove to others that we are competent and professional people? This seems like another piece of paper that gets put into a pile somewhere and becomes just another task put on the teacher."*

*"I feel this process misses the beneficial dialogue between teacher and administrator that occurs during regular evaluation."*

*"I think the growth statement is a wonderful idea. However, I sincerely hope that it will be read by the board so members know some details about the teacher's growth. I really enjoyed writing mine and sharing it with my principal. It was an absolute joy!"*

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These comments, written by four teachers several months into implementation of a professional portfolio policy designed to replace the former policy of teacher evaluation, reveal differing interpretations and reactions to both the idea of portfolio compilation and to the notion of change. For some teachers, the idea of change produces tension and anxiety; for others, excitement and anticipation. The planned implementation process, scheduled to last three years, will be perceived and lived by teachers in various ways. Their experiences will be coloured by their understandings of the theories behind the use of portfolios as an alternate form of evaluation, their interpretations of the change, and their reactions as they live through the conditions of implementation. Each of these issues will be examined with reference to the implementation of a professional portfolio policy in the Seven Oaks School Division, Winnipeg, Canada.

The use of portfolios to document growth and development over extended periods of time or to display artistic performance is an accepted and established tradition in the Fine Arts community. Their use in student evaluation and in teacher development is a relatively recent phenomenon. When portfolios are introduced into a school community, how are students and teachers prepared and enabled to use them to promote individual development? What are some of the theoretical notions supporting their use for student evaluation and can these same notions be used effectively to encourage teacher development? These issues will be examined within the context of a specific division's decision to restructure its immediate educational community.

Portfolios generally consist of multiple samples of student work collected over time. The move away from the "transmission" or "recitation" concept of pedagogy, where teachers and textbooks provide information and knowledge to the "growth" or "process" concept, where the child is an active constructor of meaning and knowledge has resulted in changes not only in classroom instructional strategies and organization but also in recording and reporting student work. Multiple-choice and single tests of achievement are seen to be in conflict with those instructional strategies which encourage students to define and seek solutions to problems directly arising from their interests.

Using portfolios, students are encouraged to collect a variety of samples of work illustrating their efforts to formulate answers to questions they have found interesting and challenging. In writing programs, the portfolio will typically contain examples of work in many modes and genres and in varying degrees of completion. Single samples of work in a narrow range of modes are not considered so representative of writing performance as are multiple samples in multiple genres. Changing concepts of literacy inform this notion: when reading and writing are regarded as discrete skills to be mastered, single pieces of writing can be used to illustrate a student's mastery of the particular skill being studied. When multiple literacies and multiple abilities are recognized, the integration of writing, thinking and knowledge becomes the focus for evaluation. The student's ability to use discrete skills as tools for expressing ideas rather than the mastery of single skills becomes foregrounded. Closely related to the idea of multiple literacies is the belief that students will be better equipped to write in some modes than in others. How they are able to reformulate and

reorganize their previous experiences into written form is dependent on many factors, two of which are the context of the original experiences and opportunities to practice their reconstruction of experience into written form. Portfolios can furnish occasions for including attempts in a variety of modes of discourse, thereby providing more complete profiles of student writers.

By collecting work over extended periods of time the development of students' abilities and interests can be documented. Some programs advocate collecting and storing all work done by students during their school years. Selection of work to be included in the final portfolio is done at the end of their school careers, either alone or in consultation with peers and teachers. This selection process is guided by both a need to fulfil institutional requirements and a need to serve the future goals of each student. On the other hand, some programs specify the type and number of assignments placed in the portfolio. This approach can remove both choice and control of the learning process from students and teachers since they have not necessarily been involved in negotiating the required pieces to be included. However, both methods can provide opportunities for students, teachers and parents to consider and discuss students' progress over time. Reflection and self-evaluation are made possible by these collections of work. Both methods can provide a window onto a student's evolving sense of identity as it reveals itself in writing samples. The potential for collaboration with peers and teacher is somewhat greater when teachers and students are actively involved with the process of portfolio compilation as record of development rather than as record of achievement. When the portfolio is being used for summative evaluation

as part of the exit procedures of an institution, students might be more passive in the selection process and rely on the teacher as judge to determine the portfolio's contents. They might be less willing to negotiate contents in this obviously unequal power situation. Nevertheless, the collaborative dimension can contribute to altering these existing, unequal relations between teacher and student and between writer and reader by affording students/writers more control over their development and learning.

The use of portfolios in itself does not guarantee the benefits arising from collaboration or from documentation of growth any more than other, more traditional forms of assessment. Portfolios can provide both formative and summative information in one document. This is information that can be used to help students gain entry to further study or to grant exit privileges from their schools. Student portfolios can also be used to increase control over teaching by becoming a source of data for teacher and program evaluation. Assignments of student work included in the portfolio can be examined to determine if the values and criteria described in course syllabi and curriculum guides are being demonstrated and adhered to by teachers. Teachers' comments and responses to written work can be analyzed to reveal congruency between their espoused goals and actual practice. In this way the potential power of portfolios as documents of progress and performance can be subverted into means of control and surveillance. How portfolios are used determines whether they serve as entry points for further development and possible benefit or as a further tool of classification and control for administrators.

The past decade has been characterized by educational reform and restructuring caused in part by massive upheavals in the economic situation, by a growing lack of trust in our public institutions and by the changing demographic structure of society. Included in the demographic issues are the realities of the presence of various multicultural groups, the differing values these groups bring to society, the number of young mothers who remain in school and changes in family structure. Policy makers and teacher educators have attempted to respond to these upheavals by adapting and altering existing policies and programs. Rarely, however, do these reform efforts adequately address either the hierarchical, organizational structures or the daily operating procedures of schools. They are most often mandated changes in instructional strategies conceived by "experts" removed from the particular context of implementation. In contrast, the change in evaluation policy of teachers in the Seven Oaks School Division resulted from efforts of the Teachers' Association (administrators are members of this association) working collaboratively with the Superintendents' department and Board of Trustees. Changes in the Public Schools Act of Manitoba in terms of length of service for awarding tenure pinpointed the discrepancy between the divisional policy for evaluation of teachers and the terms of the Act. Both teachers and administrators had been investigating alternatives to the previous policy but the change in the Act was the catalyst for change to occur. Administrators had found the previous policy too cumbersome and time consuming. Teachers did not acknowledge the formulaic procedures of clinical supervision as having any beneficial influence on their growth as teachers. The new policy states:

Seven Oaks School Division desires high quality education for its students. Quality instruction is concomitant with quality education. Effective teaching forms the foundation on which quality education is based. The Division's teacher evaluation program is designed to promote quality instruction through teacher improvement.

Teacher improvement typically has been taken to mean remediation. However, to be consistent with professional values, improvement must be viewed as applicable to all teachers, regardless of their level of competency. The components of individual improvement include reflection about teaching and motivation to change or to act on the results of reflection.

In the framework of teacher evaluation, reflection and action are built upon enabling conditions of trust and open communication. Administrators and teachers benefit from collegial discussion of education and are encouraged to engage in such discussion regularly.<sup>1</sup>

The new policy articulates several important values about possibilities for education in our division. These values relate to ideas about teaching and learning, about building a community of learners, and about providing quality education for all children of the division. Dialogue about such critical issues as the nature of knowledge, equity of educational opportunity, and the role of teachers and administrators is encouraged by providing both time and opportunities to engage in professional conversation in schools and in the larger

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<sup>1</sup> Policy GBI Evaluation of Professional Personnel. See Appendix A for the complete policy.

divisional context. Learning is a lifelong activity in which all humans are engaged. "Learning" according to Oakeshott, is "the distinguishing mark of a human being"(17). We "are what we learn to become: this is the human condition." The portfolio policy affirms that teachers are active learners engaged in the process of perfecting their craft through reflection and action based on the results of that reflection.

In replacing a policy loosely modelled on principles of clinical supervision whereby administrators evaluate teachers every three years, with a policy of documentation of individual performance and improvement, the Board of Trustees is recognizing that individual teacher development and improvement are the responsibility of the teacher. How teachers understand the new policy, its ramifications for changing contexts of teaching, and its theoretical foundations are being investigated by a portfolio research team. This team was chosen from interested teachers and administrators throughout the division and will remain in existence during the three year implementation process. Through the use of surveys and interviews, by analysis of data collected during in-servicing and by compiling the survey and interview information the team will collect information to fulfil its mandate to assist in the implementation process.

In October, 1991, the policy was presented to all school administrators, the professional development representatives from each school and from the divisional professional development committee, and to school representatives of the teachers' association. Discussion focused on three questions which became the areas addressed by the Resource Team during school in-services held during the first year of the project:

1. What is your understanding of the main ideas in the Professional Portfolio concept?
2. What general understanding do teachers have at this point?
3. What do administrators and teachers need to make this idea work?

The policy was implemented by the Board of Trustees in November, 1991; the following teacher comments were collected a few weeks prior to that date when the policy was explained to school representatives. Since the participants at the in-service were recognized leaders in the division and closely involved with the current supervisory policy, their comments might not necessarily represent the thinking of all divisional teachers.

The results of these discussions were analyzed, classified and distributed to all teachers and board members by the Research Team. Seven major themes and three major issues emerged from the data.

1. **Process.** In this category we placed comments directed at actual issues related to the establishment and implementation of the policy.

*We find writing very difficult yet we expect kids to do it every day.*

*The first year of writing the annual statement will be somewhat difficult for me, but I think future years will be easier once I know exactly what is expected and have the experience of writing one behind me.*

*I would appreciate a Bibliography or access to current literature that would be worthwhile reading.*

*My greatest concern is that the "process" will get lost in the "product". I have faith that the Portfolio Team will continue their efforts to help or facilitate educators grapple with the process of portfolio versus the "portfolio" itself.*

2. **Professional Growth.** Our original labels for comments grouped in this category were "personal growth" and "reflective practitioner". The meanings evoked by these terms were too rich and multi-layered for the research team to agree on satisfactory definitions, therefore, all comments related to the reflective nature of the exercise and implied change in the individual during the implementation process were loosely grouped in this category.

*The focus now is on teacher responsibility and serves as an invitation for growth.*

*The portfolio concept of evaluation is providing a framework within which I can engage myself in reflection and personal accountability for my professional growth. It will provide a formal structure for me to reflect critically and analytically on the previous years and then this will be the basis for the next year's plan for growth.*

*Keeping a portfolio-and-in particular-writing a statement of growth has helped me consolidate my thinking on various educational issues. It has also helped to confront problem areas and to plan for change.*

*So much of what teachers do is done "on the run" and immediately on to the next task/crisis, that I believe they seldom take (or have) time to reflect on all the excellent things that occurred during any one episode in their daily "routine". By being required to do such reflection and meditation, they may more clearly see the patterns and principles behind their strategies that really work and make them the good teachers they are.*

*I think the initial stages of this whole process are the most difficult because "change" is difficult at all levels. I think over time my personal portfolio will affect my practice more positively as I take more time to reflect on my practices.*

3. **Contribution to the profession.** All comments related to how this process can aid the professionalization of teachers were included here.

*Our energy can now be focused on more productive professional exchanges and activities.*

*This does not necessarily get an accurate assessment nor does it weed out incompetence.*

*There is an opportunity to talk about concerns in a broader context, thereby benefitting the individual and the system.*

4. **Trust** is the term we used for comments related to anxiety caused by any change in policy and to projected uses of portfolios.

*Who reads the personal growth statement? I feel teachers need to be reassured that this statement will not be used against them by administrators if they don't agree with their principal's ideas.*

*I find the "statement of growth" a complete contradiction to a self-evaluation and reflects of a Big Brother mentality. I understand the perceived need for accountability, however, I don't have to agree with it.*

*Will this really make someone a better teacher as is the expectation? Will someone with an extensive/flowery portfolio be considered for advancement over someone whose portfolio is less impressive? I'm not particularly comfortable with expounding my own virtues or blowing my own horn.*

*People will be attending conferences and reading articles about education and teaching only because they want it to look good on their portfolios, not because they sincerely want to grow professionally. People might lie regarding their successes and failures in the classroom and how they dealt with the latter. Everyone is capable of writing what the top guns want to hear. Everyone should, however, write the truth for their own personal growth. The question is--how many teachers will do it?*

*Teachers are unsure as to whether or not there is a "hidden agenda" behind this portfolio initiative. At some point, will the policy be changed to say, "yes, you must share your portfolio with administrators" and in that way a teacher will be caught off-guard and feel very vulnerable and insecure as to whether their portfolios do not measure up to the standards set out.*

5. **Collegiality** refers comments related to professional dialogue among teachers/administrators as a result of the implementation of the policy.

*Since all teachers and administrators are expected to keep a portfolio and write an annual statement of growth, all of us are implicated in the policy.*

*The policy legitimizes dialogue among colleagues and removes the adversarial aspect between teacher and administrator of clinical supervision.*

*It's better than an arbitrary check list of teaching skills and it promotes meaningful dialogue about real issues.*

*I have been asked by others to help them. It has initiated a lot of discussion.*

6. **Product.** Physical appearance and organization of the portfolio are important considerations for teachers.

*This is simply a record of reflection.*

*This could just be someone's daybook.*

*What do I put into the folder?*

*Is this a list of P.D. activities for the year?*

7. **Ownership**--comments related to the power individual teachers have in compiling their portfolios and to potential uses for the portfolio.

Three dilemmas, identified by the research team following an analysis of comments from the October presentation, were grouped loosely under "trust", "collegiality" and "formula". These dilemmas re-emerged in June, 1992, when all teachers had the opportunity to comment on the implementation process of the new policy as they completed the Professional Portfolios Questionnaire. Two additional subthemes which have subsequently been subsumed under the categories of "process" and "trust" surfaced as we analyzed the second set of teacher comments. Concerns about the ability to cope with additional commitments on their time and expressions indicating support or lack of support for the policy figured prominently. Were these new concerns related to the pressures and demands experienced by teachers as the academic year winds down or were they more indicative of the perceptions of divisional teachers as they coped for the first time with the increased

demands placed on them by the portfolio policy? Additional data to be collected in June, 1993, at the end of the second year of implementation, will provide more information about issues of support and teachers' abilities to cope with time constraints. Selected comments from teachers' responses to the questionnaire illustrate the themes labelled time and support.

**Time.** Comments related to the pressures of lack of time were placed in a separate category in our preliminary classification. Further consideration of these comments reveal concerns directly related to how the policy is to be implemented and to procedures that teachers and schools should follow during the implementation process.

*I feel rushed and totally unable to do this at this time. I haven't even considered either one and will do everything at the last minute.*

*Teaching is interactive and time consuming. Personal time is rarer and rarer-and to spend much of it in self-evaluation is not attractive.*

*I would like to see more time allotted to portfolio development. My schedule does not allow enough time to adequately prepare a portfolio.*

*There is the pressure of when to find the time to write it. No time during the working day, no time at home. I'm doing this at recess-again a time problem.*

*Truthfully, I already feel overwhelmed with paperwork. The most serious concern I have is the amount of time this will require. I anticipate spending five to ten hours writing my statement of growth. In June, this amount of time is hard to come by.*

*I am very concerned with the fact that one more "requirement" is passed on to the classroom teachers and very little time is given. Hardworking, reflective teachers may find the keeping of a portfolio very difficult. Why cram more work onto a person who is already overworked?*

*As far as I am concerned, this is a waste of my valuable time. It seems that the true aim of teaching has been forgotten-spending time preparing for classroom activities instead of writing another useless, forgotten report.*

*I have been very busy with regular lesson preparation and student evaluation. I see the advantages of a portfolio but have not yet had time to take it seriously. I have spent no time talking or discussing with peers. I think it is a good idea, though time consuming in an ever more demanding schedule for teachers.*

**Support.** Initially these comments were placed in a separate category but closer reading of them reveals the underlying issue of trust or lack of trust. The level of trust felt by teachers appears based on teachers' comfort with the theoretical constructs grounding the policy, with the idea of change, and with their belief in the professionalism of colleagues and administrators.

*I believe in the Professional Portfolio concept and I'm sure it will help me to continue to develop and grow as a professional. I think this method is necessary to improve skills, concepts, curriculum content and self image and is a far superior evaluation process than those used in the past.*

*I am not in favour of this plan in the least. We have some very poor teachers now and as far as I'm concerned this will just encourage more of the same from them.*

*I am very excited about this process! I am presently experiencing a renewed energy for my professional growth. I have confidence in the direction the School Division is moving towards, and it is very exciting to witness moved in progressive education amongst colleagues, administration, and the School Board Members. A wonderful network of collaboration which can offer so much empowerment.*

*This whole project is helping to take the fun out of teaching as it is an extra burden forced on teachers. I feel that teachers, as professionals, should have been able to opt in or opt out of the process.*

*The workload this places upon the individual teacher will have a negative impact on the education of the students.*

*Am sceptical as to its value also, in some cases, its validity.*

*I am pleased that the division is going this direction. It is respectful of teachers as learners.*

*Any system is better than the old system. Let's try it.*

Professional portfolios freed from prescriptive formulae designed to evaluate teachers can influence existing hierarchical relations between teachers and administrators by reducing the supervisory dimension of their relationships. Some of the preceding comments reflect teachers' perceptions on changes in the role expectations for teachers and administrators which are enabled by the policy. Many wrote about reflection, self-evaluation and dialogue among all participants in the educational process, stressing the benefits such processes could promote. Some mentioned the need for external controls and accountability which administrators in their supervisory roles had formerly provided and indicate a desire for more structure to the policy. I believe these teacher comments illustrate connections between the use of portfolios for student evaluation and as tools for teacher development. In addition these comments contribute valuable information to the existing knowledge about processes of change in educational institutions.

Complex tasks, such as writing and teaching, become possible after certain skills and knowledge have been internalized and rely on the integration of such skills as problem-setting, problem-solving, creative, critical thinking and effective communication. Both tasks require the ability to assume a critical stance towards the product: the capacity to distance self from activity allows contemplation to occur in the individual. Contemplation of actions

and situations leads to development and growth. A variety of written artifacts produced over time can present readers with a more complete idea of the development of writers and their ever increasing control over formal compositional structures at the lexical, syntactic and textual levels. Similarly, an examination of teaching artifacts, such as course syllabi, assignments, and lesson plans can reveal professional growth of teachers and their increased control of classroom organization, instructional strategies, interpersonal relationships, and curriculum development. Portfolios can demonstrate variety and multiple modes of writing and teaching as well as growth of the teacher/writer over extended periods of time. Portfolios may be a window into the ongoing development of teacher identity and into changing perceptions of the roles of teachers and supervisors. As teachers begin to use the portfolio to record significant teaching events, they will begin to select and foreground certain types of activities and situations. How the selection process changes during the implementation process and what meaning teachers shape as a result of the change will be interesting to document and might provide us with information about the evolution of teacher identity.

By examining a variety of artifacts it is possible to broaden the parameters of successful writing and teaching by recognizing their diversity and complexity. Inclusion of multiple genres and modes of performance could extend possibilities for practice. Samples of teaching as coaching, as collaborating, as narrating, as modelling will extend the notions we have of teachers. How dimensions of successful writing and teaching are defined depends to a great extent on shared understandings of successful practice by practitioners,

These criteria for success have been extrapolated from exemplars from within the writing and teaching communities respectively. Contingent contextual factors such as length of activity, time of day, place, and personalities of specific classes are woven and intertwined with stories and examples of successful practitioners to develop the fabric, the norms of successful practice. These norms are assimilated into the "lore" surrounding teaching and help shape the self-understanding of practitioners. The activity of teaching is much more interactive and dynamic than "recitation" or "transmission" of factual knowledge and management of students whereas writing involves more than translation of thought into words. People engaged in writing and teaching respond not only to their present physical and social contexts but to internalized, evoked and remembered ones. Bakhtin's notion of "heteroglossia" encourages us to thoughtfully consider the importance of previous texts and teaching/learning situations as they impinge on writers and teachers at work. We hear other voices in our mind's ear as we work, voices of our teachers as they were teaching us, and voices of others talking about their teachers. Our reactions and responses to these voices alter our present and influence our actions.

Not only can portfolios demonstrate growth and development in technical aspects of writing and teaching but they also contribute to the development of self-evaluation and critical reflection. Both teaching and writing are recursive activities, not linear and sequential ones. There is no single set of procedures that guarantees success. Effective, successful writers and teachers adapt their overarching performance schema to the demands they perceive in each situation by responding to contextual cues and anticipating possible

responses and courses of action. Both are intentional activities involving structuring experiences into products and active consideration of models of these activities. The anticipation of future patterns of organization working in conjunction with reaction to previously established construals of similar experiences creates new objects for reflection. Schon's clarification of the terms "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action" can provide a way into a brief exploration of reflection and of how portfolios can be an aid to reflection..

"Reflection-in-action" involves the intuitive responses and reactions of practitioners based on their tacit knowledge as they are engaged in teaching and writing. Each situation contains possible courses of action within it, actions which are dependent on contextual factors such as previous knowledge and experiences in similar situations, intentions and purposes of the participants and the interpersonal relationships of the group. If we consider those who teach and write as actors working to enact a scene, we will view responses from students and teachers as crucial elements in furthering any action. These responses, however, are not entirely free but are constrained by the situation, by the previous history of the group and whether there is common understanding of the purpose of the activity. The appropriateness of the responses helps the teacher/writer determine whether the activity is succeeding or whether some modifications must be made to the script. This type of reflection which occurs during the activity is implicit in both teaching and writing and contributes to choices of possible actions taken during the activity.

"Reflection-on-action" occurs when the activity has been completed and can be regarded as object of contemplation. This type of reflection is usually more focused since

attention is directed at examining the activity and is not diverted by the multiple demands of the situation. Schon suggests that we set the problems and define the parameters of our experiences by "naming the things which we will attend and framing the context in which we will attend to them"(40). Something unsettling in the experience causes us to question and examine it in order to resolve the unease we feel or to seek alternate ways of coping with the situation. Peter Grimmer's introduction Reflection in Teacher Education presents an interpretation of Schon's statement regarding establishing limits to our reflection by suggesting that we examine action in one or more of the following ways: to decide ways of proceeding, to choose among alternate ways of proceeding, or to gain new understandings of ourselves, our contexts and our unquestioned assumptions about practice(12-13).

Can writers and teachers move in and out of these layers of reflection unaided or do they need the support of thoughtful colleagues and mentors to critically examine their experiences and challenge their interpretations of these experiences? I believe portfolios can contribute to developing habits of critical reflection in practitioners by providing opportunities for examination of practice as it is recorded in the portfolio. The first layer of reflection can be linked to a technical-rational perception of knowledge in writing and teaching, where concern is directed more towards mechanical aspects of production than with a complete and coherent performance. This type of reflection serves to encourage thought about good teaching and writing by examining current understandings of accepted practice in order to inform future action. The importance of contextual factors, such as class size,

organizational structures of schools or various samples of writing on a theme, could extend the limits of reflection by extending the limits of the frame of the situation. Reflection would result in making choices among alternate ways of proceeding, choosing the most effective procedure from an extensive repertoire of prior knowledge drawn from situations resembling the current one. The final layer involves reflection as restructuring experience in order to envisage new possibilities for action. This creative stage presents powerful possibilities for portfolio use in staff development and professional development of teachers. New perceptions of teaching situations, of the roles of participants and of the understandings and assumptions driving current practice can create a renewed educational world. This "reseeing" of teaching and learning must surely lead to changes in the conventions and traditions of practice. Portfolios provide one path to a possible reframing of the educational enterprise; collegial support and professional dialogue contribute the materials with which to pave the path.

Restructuring experience allows transformed perceptions of both self and context. When these transformations occur, participants enter new situations and build new relationships with colleagues, students and administrators. Communities of learners working together to discover and produce meaning could be established. What changes in bureaucratic structure might occur when teacher supervision is no longer a managerial task for school principals? Time formerly devoted to record-keeping and report-writing can be spent in classrooms and in discussions with teachers and students. Teachers and principals will come to view themselves differently, will take on the role that the new perception offers.

Fundamental shifts in bureaucratic structure would be both constitutive and constituent of altered conceptions of teaching, learning and assessment and of changed relations of power and control.

Such radical changes occur very rarely in education. Much of the rhetoric of school reform has not adequately acknowledged the multidimensionality and complexity of either the teaching/learning situation or the change process in educational systems. A reflection of the anomie of society, the lack of faith invested in societal institutions such as school is the devaluing of teachers by the community. Media report poor student achievement, special interest groups advocate both a return to basics and a demand for quality education and many policy makers propose the introduction of merit pay, voucher systems and school choice. The attention of the community, guided by the media becomes focused on weaknesses of the system. The reports paint a stark, monochromatic picture which simplifies the multidimensionality of the situation. The reports gloss over ambiguous phrases, such as back to the basics, quality education and standards by implying common understandings. This external atmosphere forms but one part of teachers' objective reality. Other segments of their reality are increasing numbers of students as parents, economic difficulties in the community, and vast numbers of hungry, battered and abused students, many of whom do not speak English as their first language. A final segment of teachers' reality results from norms of schooling and socialization which foster isolation, teacher training programs which do not fully prepare novice teachers for the classroom and decision making procedures which remove teachers from curricular decisions.

The cumulative impact of these forces increases when we consider the subjective realities, the interpretations of communities and teachers working within them. Each community internalizes and constructs responses to reports about education and teachers within each community, create their own realities as they incorporate new information into their previous constructs. Change is a highly personal experience and participants involved in any change process will individually interpret the need for change at a particular time, the clarity of procedures recommended for implementation, the relationship between their personal beliefs and new values as well as personal cost to themselves in terms of time and energy. Is it worthwhile to compile a professional portfolio and write an annual statement of growth at this time? Each teacher poses this question in considering costs and benefits. Comments from several teachers reveal the "zone of uncertainty" being experienced by the teacher community. What will the new work requirements be? Will it be possible to squeeze collecting material for a portfolio and writing a statement of growth into an already full schedule? How will teachers be helped to construct new perceptions of themselves as competent professionals in the new system? If the project is to last only three years, what happens if I don't participate? Comments quoted earlier demonstrate not only the variety of personal interpretations but also different types of understanding of both the policy and the implementation process.

Evidence of partial or incomplete understanding of the policy appears in statements referring to incompetence in the profession and to lack of feedback regarding performance. According to the policy, teachers who are not considered successful and all novice teachers

will still be placed on "intensive" supervision, a process requiring consultation between teacher and supervisor both before and after scheduled observations of classes. During the consultation lesson plans and goals are to be discussed and evaluated. After numerous classroom visitations and written summaries of performance are shown to the teacher for comments and reactions, a summary is to be filed at the division office.

The perception of some that portfolio compilation removes feedback about performance displays a rather surface reading of policy which clearly states that "teachers are encouraged to engage in discussions with colleagues about teaching activities and professional growth activities." In addition, teachers maintain the right to request formal evaluation from their administrators. Indeed, teachers have few occasions to interact with other adults during their working day, due to the cellular physical and organizational structure of schools and to the infrequent opportunities to observe colleagues at work. Staffroom conversations devoted to issues such as instructional strategies, curricular concerns and shared goals for the school are rare. It is no wonder that successful teachers enjoyed the few occasions for discussion with administrators that clinical supervision provides and are reluctant to lose them. The intent of the policy was that by removing the managerial requirement from the supervision process, building administrators would have time to visit classrooms more regularly and to engage in professional dialogue with teachers. The new policy is being implemented as but one segment in a pattern of other divisional innovations such as team leaders in each school, a divisional symposium of visiting scholars, groups of action researchers working on special projects related to their teaching, and with the ongoing

support of the portfolio resource and research teams. All these innovations have been designed to foster and encourage occasions for dialogue about professional practice to become an established part of the work environment.

These innovations demonstrate awareness that teaching and learning occur in social situations with the potential for numerous personal interactions. They also demonstrate an understanding that changes in community beliefs, philosophies and values occur through discussion and dialogue when the polyphony of different voices is empowered to construct new understandings, common purposes and a shared reality. The counterpoint of the cantus firmus supplied by the voices of conservatism weaves among the melodies of the innovators. Each voice has opportunities to be heard and to thread its distinctive pattern into shaping the new reality. Schools whose members hold shared goals about teaching and learning and common expectations for the management of student conduct are characterized by Rosenholtz as "moving" or "learning enriched" schools. Common goals and expectations have been developed through continuing discussions about educational issues by all members of the educational community.

Our implementation process has just begun. What do portfolios allow that other forms of assessment have not allowed? Can they provide opportunities to create a different culture for teaching and learning and a new language to discuss this culture? The content of the new culture will be concerned with the beliefs and attitudes of teachers; it is hoped that the form of the new culture will become characterized by collaboration and collegiality. New patterns of interaction where teachers and administrators work together to ensure that

teaching and learning occur in each classroom in our community will become the norm. These new patterns of interaction will contribute to the evolution of a language concerned with expressing the transformed context of teaching. The Portfolio Resource and Research support teams can help in the process of shaping new meanings and understandings for teachers as they negotiate the hazards of this alternate path of teacher evaluation and development.

By changing the focus of evaluation from documentation and recording of performance to a process in which performance documents become a means to improve practice, the new policy places power in the hands of teachers. By choosing what activities and artifacts are to be included in the portfolio, teacher learners exert a measure of control over their learning and development. The perceived crisis in educational institutions has created a context for educators to learn different ways of examining our work; portfolios seem to allow practitioners the freedom and responsibility to define and extend the limits of practice by a close examination of the nature of teaching and learning. Our challenge is to create a scene in which the power that the portfolio process promises is allowed to unfold.

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## EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL

Seven Oaks School Division desires high quality education for its students. Quality instruction is concomitant with quality education. Effective teaching forms the foundation on which quality education is based. The Division's teacher evaluation program is designed to promote quality instruction through teacher improvement.

Teacher improvement typically has been taken to mean remediation. However, to be consistent with professional values, improvement must be viewed as applicable to all teachers, regardless of their level of competency. The components of individual improvement include reflection about teaching and motivation to change or to act on the results of reflection.

In the framework of teacher evaluation, reflection and action are built upon enabling conditions of trust and open communication. Supervisory leadership built on trust and communication will foster the professional growth which is a natural result of reflection and action. Administrators and teachers benefit from collegial discussion of education and teaching and are encouraged to engage in such discussion frequently.

The Division's teacher evaluation program shall be designed to promote professional growth and thus form a part of the larger goal of providing quality education to the children of the Division.

### GUIDELINES

### OBJECTIVES

While the primary purpose of teacher evaluation is to improve the quality of instruction, it must be noted that evaluation serves an organization function as well. All teachers need to experience continuous professional growth, however it is also necessary for evaluation to serve the management needs for decisions re: granting tenure to non-tenured teachers or for providing direct supervisory intervention to teachers who, in the judgement of the school administrator, are experiencing difficulty in their teaching situation. Therefore a teacher evaluation policy must differentiate these situations.

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## **PROCESS**

For the purpose of evaluating teachers who are tenured and who are experiencing success in their teaching assignment, the focus will be on promoting continued improvement through an evaluation process that emphasizes professional growth through the use of teacher portfolios.

For the purpose of evaluating teachers who are non-tenured, or for those teachers who may be experiencing difficulty, evaluation will include clinical supervision, as well as professional growth through the use of teacher portfolios.

## **EVALUATION OF TENURED TEACHERS**

Tenured teachers who are in no apparent difficulty in their teaching assignments shall experience ongoing evaluation designed for continued professional growth through the use of teacher portfolios.

## **RATIONALE**

The teacher, acting as a professional who serves the public interest, must be personally responsible and personally accountable for his/her professional decisions and actions. He/She must ensure that he/she is current in the knowledge of the profession and must be accountable in the application of that knowledge.

Attempts to ensure accountability of professional action through evaluations which include scheduled observations and checklists and which are timed at two or three year intervals have been made. Evaluation of this nature is time consuming, somewhat contrived and does not address the fact that professional growth is a highly personal, continuous experience. Accountability in this context has come to be seen as a highly technical, quality control exercise directed at ensuring minimal competencies. Opportunity must be provided to enable teachers to develop a growth orientation which is free of the encumbrances of the typical evaluation mentality.

## **TEACHER PORTFOLIOS**

The intent of the teacher portfolio is to stimulate improved teaching through personal critique which is built upon reflection of activities of teaching. The portfolio assists in this process in that it is a means of keeping a record of the teacher's professional involvement.

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## **PORTFOLIO CONSTRUCTION**

A teacher is expected to keep ongoing documentation of his/her work. The documentation is personally designed and constructed. As such it might include examples of plans, materials, assignments, tests, students' work, written feedback to students, correspondence with parents, correspondence with administration and colleagues, evidence of professional growth activities such as workshops, special courses, seminars, certification and documents received, notes to self, relevant articles and so forth. The teacher's statement of a personal philosophy of education and curriculum vitae would also be worthy portfolio entries.

The portfolio is the personal record of the individual teacher wherein the teacher defines his/her situation, interprets what is seen to be important and documents the practices that were applied. The highly personal nature of the portfolio precludes any definitive description of portfolio elements. However, it is recognized that documentation from the many activities that constitute teaching as a profession is desirable and advantageous. (An example of a structure for a portfolio is attached to this policy as Exhibit A).

## **APPLICATION**

The teacher's portfolio is a tool for the professional development of the teacher. Teachers are expected to develop and maintain a portfolio as part of their professional duties. The portfolio will be kept by the teacher in a suitably secure location which can be accessed only under the teacher's direction.

Teachers may initiate a request for in-depth consideration and discussion of their portfolio with their administrator. Such discussion shall be without prejudice.

Such discussions become a matter of record only when the teacher is being considered for tenure or has been duly notified that his/her teaching performance is in question.

Teachers are encouraged to make regular reference to their portfolios and be reflective in their practice. Teachers are also encouraged to engage in discussions with colleagues about teaching activities and professional growth activities. Portfolio contents, while recognized as personal and private, could be a part of the discussion at the discretion of the teacher.

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In addition to maintaining a portfolio, teachers will be required to submit to their administration a written commentary on their professional growth once each school year. The commentary will be signed by the principal and forwarded to central office for placement in the teacher's personnel file. (An example of what might be addressed in such a commentary is provided in Exhibit B.)

Teachers have the right to request a written evaluation from their administrator. The format of this evaluation shall be decided by the teacher and administrator, and shall be for the teacher's use only. Teachers have the option of forwarding a copy of this evaluation to central office for their personnel file.

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## EXHIBIT A

TASKS	CONCERNS			
	Schoolteacher's responsibility	Subject matter	Individual students	Class Organization
Teaching a class	modelling curiosity or courtesy; justifying a task, procedure, or rule	showing how to write a simple sentence; presenting elements of a theory	checking a student's understanding, giving help	teaching a class rule or routine; maintaining the routine in a given case
Planning, preparation	setting academic and social goals for a course or unit	selecting and sequencing topics for a lesson	adapting audio-visuals or hand-outs for students	selecting or designing a small group procedure
Student evaluation	using evaluation results to redesign instruction	composing a question, task, test or assignment	making comments on a student's product	assessing a class's progress toward civility, cooperation
Professional exchange	debating aims and means of "discipline" at a faculty meeting	asking a colleague for current information on a topic	talking with a school counsellor about a student	coaching a colleague through a unit that uses a class debate
Community exchange	explaining school goals at back-to-school night	recruiting a guest speaker; soliciting materials	meeting with a parent or social worker	leading a field trip to a museum, park, or workplace

## Some Activities That Might Show in a Portfolio

Source: The New Handbook of Teacher Evaluation, Ed., by Jason Millman and Linda Darling-Hammond, Sage Publications, 1990.

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**EXHIBIT B**

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE TEACHER'S ANNUAL  
COMMENTARY ON PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**

This is intended to be a written commentary which gives evidence of the professional growth and development of the teacher. A well maintained portfolio can be of assistance in developing the commentary. The commentary may be submitted at any time during the school year, but would probably be best submitted during the latter portion of the school year.

Examples of areas which may be addressed are:

- involvement in professional development activities, (e.g. school committees, division committees, external agencies, conferences attended, etc.) and the resultant effect on the teacher as a professional;
- an initiative taken, including reasons for taking the action and results of such action including learning gained;
- cooperative activities with colleagues -- examples of collegial interaction (respecting anonymity of colleagues in describing same);
- a challenging teaching experience, response to the challenge, learning gained as a result;
- a gratifying teaching experience -- what made it so? could any of the conditions be applied again?
- consideration of future professional growth activities that may be pursued.

The commentary is intended to be a reflective personal assessment of growth and development as a professional and as such should be more than a simple description of activities.

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