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ABSTRACT

The use of portfolio creation with teacher education students is one way to enact the spirit and practices associated with the "true testing" movement. True testing advocates relevant work, in-context work, metacognitive work, self-evaluation, peer-collaborations, work commitment, self-directedness, successive work drafts, and work affectivity. Developmental portfolios contain work samples that represent student growth in one or several areas over time (e.g., successive drafts of an essay as well as the final teacher-scored version). Representational portfolios contain various examples of a student's best work without inclusion of successive draft or model creations. Students can also be asked to produce portfolios with developmental and representational dimensions over a full semester. Criteria for portfolio evaluation include: (1) positive appearance; (2) organization of contents; (3) mediations; (4) significant meaning; (5) position papers; and (6) originality. Students receive the teacher's standards for evaluation and choose to submit examples for their field work and position papers on teaching theory. The final production stage involves student initiatives as they plot portfolio content, a higher order thinking process. Teachers can facilitate this process with explanations, encouragement, and time for student pairs and critique groups to exercise helpful input and feedback. The portfolio work is a fine opportunity for critical and creative thinking experiences. (JB)

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COLLEGE STUDENT PORTFOLIOS: A REPRESENTATIONAL  
FORMAT FOR "BEST PROFILE" DIMENSIONS

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The Organization of Teacher Educators in reading  
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**SUMMARY OF PAPER PRESENTED AT INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION  
PANEL OF SPEAKERS.**

Tues., April 27, 1993  
Hyatt Regency East #1  
San Antonio, Texas

**Title - "College Student Portfolios: A Representational Format  
for 'Best Profile' Dimensions"**

A college professor describes how use of portfolios with teacher education students is one way to enact the spirit and practices associated with the true testing movement. Advocates of true testing recommend that content challenges require: 1) relevant work, 2) in-context work, 3) metacognitive work, 4) self-evaluation, 5) peer-collaborations, 6) work committment, 7) self-directedness, 8) successive work drafts, and 9) work affectivity.

"Developmental" and "representational" portfolios are described with emphasis on teaching students how to construct representational portfolios. The purpose of representational portfolios is to present a "best profile" of one's teaching career potentials. Criteria for portfolio evaluation include: 1) positive appearance, 2) organization of contents, 3) mediations, 4) significant meaning, 5) position papers, and 6) originality.

The paper advances emphasis that college student portfolio work, developmental or representational, is one of the finest critical and creative thinking experiences that can be offered to young scholars and future teachers.

COLLEGE STUDENT PORTFOLIOS: A REPRESENTATIONAL  
FORMAT FOR BEST PROFILE DIMENSIONS

"True-Testing Convictions"

I've offered portfolio creation options to my sophomore college students for four years. The course where this occurs is titled "Classroom Appraisal and Evaluation." The course content is intended to enhance student theory and practical competence related to various kinds of ability and achievement testing, scoring, and wholistic assessment.

When the innovative work in the area often referred to as "true" or "authentic" testing, came to my attention, I pursued it with high interest and began to mentally weigh advantages for students and teachers. I came to understand the "true testing" movement as a possible watershed event, if it caught on, because it promised such a remarkable shift in how teachers would teach and how students would think and learn. What I specifically appreciated was how the active learning and thinking natures of students could be recruited through "true test" curriculums. I developed a personal glossary of reasons to shift my course goals

toward more focus on "true testing" and what I came to believe it would mean to teaching success and higher quality student work. As to what "true testing" may produce for students, the following are some personal beliefs:

- relevant work. Their work would be consequential because it would influence their present and future. Their work would be intellectual, but with the additional advantage of being applicable beyond desk tops and teacher grade books.

- in-context work. Student work would have a real-world dimension. Their classroom work (and homework) would be more like that performed in employment and career domains. Student productions would be less insulated and more wholistic.

- metacognitive work. Students would carefully monitor their work progress and decision-making energies. Students would become more intensely conscious of their decisions and efforts. They would practice what psychologists call, "executive control."

- self-evaluation. They would practice work-criticism while they produced projects. This seems superior to working uncritically, then waiting for teacher criticisms.

- peer-collaborations. Much of the "true" test student work is recommended as best accomplished in interactive student venues. Peer consultations during work efforts are recommended.

- work commitment. They would select work that had a personal dimension for them. During teacher or peer interviews,

students would indicate why such work was planned and completed. What was "their stake" in the work?

- self-directedness. Students would gather the needed materials, estimate, then allocate their own time to the chosen work. Even submission deadlines would be time period windows rather than traditional specific day or hour deadlines.

- Awareness that best production requires successive drafts. One does a preliminary draft (written or constructed), seeks peer or teacher feedback, then improves the work.

- work affectivity. All of the above should produce emotional responses. How can work that is consciously pondered, self-selected, self-directed, and peer evaluated not produce stronger emotions than more traditional teacher dominated work?

#### Teacher Education Portfolios:

Portfolios occupy important territories in the "true test" movement and all of the above characteristics are applicable to portfolio efforts. In summary, when students do portfolios in the course I teach, they participate in consequential, realistic, metacognitive, self-evaluative, peer-interactive, personally reflective, incrementally drafted, and highly affective work. Each of these good-production outcomes are energized by critical and creative thinking.

Many teachers have turned to portfolios for students because they represent so many cognitive, affective, and psychomotor work

opportunities. "Portfolios have the advantage of containing several samples of student work assembled in a purposeful manner (Arter and Spandel, 1992). They may be developmental or representative. Developmental portfolios contain work samples that represent student growth in one or several areas over time. Students would be encouraged to place successive drafts of an essay in the portfolio as well as the final teacher-scored draft. A geography work-group would submit evidence of a map-construction project as it progressed, perhaps by way of several photographs, from start to finish.

Representational portfolios contain various examples of one's best work without inclusion of successive draft or model creations done prior to that final creation. I refer to these as "best-profile" portfolios, named in reference to the career-advancing samples that models and artists carry with them in pursuit of employment. The crucial decision involved with these is what artifacts, representing the best array of talents, should be included in the current portfolio.

The kind of portfolios my teacher education students produce have developmental and "best-profile" dimensions. Their portfolio work is implicitly developmental because they are encouraged to continue and refine them through their junior and senior college years. During that time, their portfolios will be works in process. But ultimately they will need a "best-profile"

portfolio to take with them when they interview for teaching jobs.

There's even a "best-profile" requirement associated with successful completion of my course. They will submit a portfolio that best displays their most impressive experiences and best evidence of current teaching talent and potential. Doing this is very challenging to relatively inexperienced students. In years to come, with more portfolio work at elementary and secondary levels, students may take more naturally to the developmental and best-profile aspects involved.

The process of portfolio production is near to a full semester. Students are introduced to developmental and representational portfolio concepts. Then, those who choose to construct their own portfolios (a different work option is also available) are introduced to my standards, which means that they learn how their productions will be scored. Portfolios submitted must represent high achievement qualities. The students must decide what they already have and what they must yet produce as portfolio content. Let me interject that all of the students will have a five week classroom teaching assignment toward the end of that college semester. This field experience will provide portfolio content opportunities. During these weeks, they will draft "best" lesson plans, construct "best" visual teaching displays, compose "best" examinations, or embark on "best"

interdisciplinary teaching experiments. Somehow the students must determine how they will directly or indirectly display or portray these "best" activities in their portfolios.

But all is not hands-on activity content. They must also produce evidence of teaching theory awareness with the production of three "position papers" on any topic of their choice. We discuss possible topics perceived as very relevant to classroom teaching success. Topics such as classroom management, exceptional children, cooperative learning, at-risk children, alternative education, or effective assessment are a few choice potentials. Standards for the position paper scoring are also discussed until portfolio producers are well aware of the challenge. The position paper dimension is meant to insure that standards of remembered knowledge, professional values, and compositional fluency are not neglected or portrayed as unimportant.

#### **Portfolio Creation Standards:**

The following is an exact copy of the portfolio creation standards that I explain and display with an overhead projector transparency. Students know that these will guide my scoring decisions.

EVALUATION STANDARDS FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

| weak | fair | good | very good | excellent |
|------|------|------|-----------|-----------|
| 1    | 2    | 3    | 4         | 5         |
| .5   | .5   | .5   | .5        |           |

INTRODUCTION (Opening commentary and perspective is effective). \_\_\_\_\_

POSITIVE APPEARANCE (Neatness and Visual Attractiveness Throughout). \_\_\_\_\_

ORGANIZATION (Content is Logically Arranged and Presented). \_\_\_\_\_

MEDIATIONS (Author Commentaries Where Necessary or Appropriate). \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNIFICANT MEANING (Contents Represent Strong Professional/Personal Potentials). \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION PAPERS (3 are required).

Language, Mechanics (spelling, punc., correct grammar usage). \_\_\_\_\_

Language Literacy (paragraphs, sentences, and vocabulary are correct and fluent). \_\_\_\_\_

Concept Accuracy and Clarity (ideas are true to current research and clearly expressed). \_\_\_\_\_

ORIGINALITY (This Standard is Applied only to Highly Unique/Creative Efforts). \_\_\_\_\_

I encourage portfolio creators to include an introduction page to uniquely and creatively introduce themselves and the

content. The necessity of positive appearance should require little if any explanation, but it is treated nonetheless. Organization requires good critical thinking skills and perserverence. Mediations refer to occasional author comments to explain inclusions like best lesson plans, photos of displays, and other. Significant meaning requires careful reflections about values and beliefs that some of the portfolio content should directly or indirectly represent. Hopefully the position paper standards are sufficiently clear. Originality may be the most subjective standard - one which I've considered dropping for lack clear determination of how highly creative portfolios might differ from good but more ordinary counterparts.

The evaluation standards are far from monolithic. Surely I'll make minor or even major changes of the existing standards and teachers should want to create their own standards to facilitate student production and final scoring reliability. What is so important is that understanding of these standards, through presentation and small or large group discussions occur early in the course, and then reoccur as needed.

#### Summation:

The final production stage involves student initiatives. They begin to plot portfolio content, and this is where those many higher order thought processes, cited pages ago, must be exercised. Teachers can facilitate their occurrence with clear

explanations, group and individual encouragements, and course hour time set aside for student pairs and critique groups to exercise helpful inputs and feedback. I also indicate availability in my office for offering similar assistance at any point in the portfolio creation process. If students finish a draft prior to the submission date, I'll look it over and make suggestions for possible improvements. At this point any scoring is withheld. If a student submits a portfolio early with our mutual understanding that the submission is final, I'll then score it, using a size-reduced copy of the evaluation form. These, clipped to the evaluated portfolios are returned to students prior to the semester's end.

College student portfolio work, representational or developmental, is one of the finest critical and creative thinking experiences that can be offered. Even if portfolio creation is required, I suspect that the aspect of being required is submerged in a kind of higher student awareness of how important portfolio endeavors are. Such belief may spring from conviction that such work for those seeking teaching certification, should be done, whether as part of a formal college course or not. Students have expressed this to me in groups and individually. The advantage of optional portfolio course assignments is that teacher and peer group critique and guidance opportunities will be available.

## REFERENCES

- Arter, J., and V. Spandel. (Spring, 1992). "Using Portfolios of Student Work in Instruction and Assessment." Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 11, 1:36-44.