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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the use of portfolios by administrators who may use them to self evaluate, monitor professional growth and development, document specific competencies, or prepare for a job interview. While the primary outcome of the portfolio is to assist the administrator in developing a better knowledge of his/her professional self, the paper notes that the artifacts collected and the reflections written can be used in a variety of ways. The paper states that the collection of artifacts is the first step of creating a portfolio, and the second step is to reflect on the materials and make personal adjustments about professional strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments, failures, aspirations, and goals. A portfolio, according to the paper, if constructed in an education administration graduate program, may consist of documents, papers, articles, certificates, letters, projects, work samples, test scores, and/or other materials which have been specifically selected for a particular purpose or need. The paper (1) focuses on several current uses of Administrative Portfolios for the emerging administrator and the administrative practitioner, noting that there are three types of portfolio: the Professional Development Portfolio, the Career Advancement Portfolio, and the Evaluation Portfolio; (2) reports the findings of a survey of California administrators on the suggested content of such portfolios; and (3) describes the use of the Administrative Portfolio for the induction, development, and assessment of administrative credential candidates at California State University, Fresno. (Contains nine references.) (NKA)

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# Administrative Portfolios: Current Uses and Development by Prospective and Practicing Administrators

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## Administrative Portfolios: Current Uses and Development by Prospective and Practicing Administrators

Portfolios, as authentic assessment devices, are in wide use in schools across the nation. Primary school children through high school seniors are collecting and organizing their best work samples. In many school districts, teachers are also creating portfolios, most often for professional development or evaluation purposes. While "messy to construct, cumbersome to store, difficult to score, and vulnerable to misrepresentation" (Wolf, p.129), the number of teachers who are creating their own documentation of teaching performance is growing. Perhaps it is not surprising that administrators as well, are interested in developing portfolios. Sometimes begun as part of graduate course work, the administrative portfolio may be used to self-evaluate, monitor professional growth and development, document specific competencies, or prepare for a job interview. While the emphasis of the administrative portfolio is usually on professional development, the artifacts collected and the reflections written can be used for a variety of purposes.

The primary outcome of the portfolio is to assist the administrator in developing a better knowledge and understanding of one's professional self. Reflection, diligent effort, and an accurate knowledge of one's competencies are key ingredients in the process of building a portfolio. Bennis (1989) interviewed successful leaders and determined that one common ingredient of transformational leadership is self knowledge. Bennis writes, "...no one can teach you how to become yourself, to take charge, to express yourself, except you" (p. 55). The portfolio can certainly serve these purposes for today's administrators.

### What is an Administrative Portfolio?

In many ways similar to a student or teacher portfolio, an administrative portfolio is a "collection of thoughtfully selected exhibits or artifacts and reflections indicative of an individual's experiences and ability to lead and of the individual's progress toward and/or the attainment of established goals or criteria" (Brown and Irby, 1997, p. 2). Evans (1996) suggests that the portfolio is an archive, an exhibit of a professional's qualities, experiences, accomplishments, and potential. Guaglianone (1996) describes a portfolio as "a demonstration of one's public self as a representation of what one can do, what one knows, and what one has done, presented to a select audience" (p. 232). Barnett (1992) distinguishes between folios and portfolios. Folios contain a collection of artifacts and reproductions which include budgets, professional development plans, videotaped events, journals, oral histories, and autobiographies that capture a person's performance. Portfolios, according to Barnett, include artifacts and reproductions demonstrating particular skills, competencies, or pieces of knowledge. The latter definitions are especially significant as administrators begin the development of a portfolio; the collection of artifacts is the first step. The second is to reflect on the materials and make personal judgments about professional strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments, failures, aspirations, and goals.

A portfolio, if constructed in an education administration graduate program, may consist of documents, papers, articles, certificates, projects, letters, work samples,

test scores, and /or other materials which have been specifically selected for a particular purpose or need. In the Education Administration Program at California State University, Fresno, students begin compiling the Administrative Portfolio during the first semester of course work and continue building the portfolio throughout the entire Preliminary and Professional Credential Programs. The candidate's portfolio is used at the completion of the Professional Credential Program in a presentation format to demonstrate professional competence as a school administrator.

### Purposes of the Paper

The purposes of the paper are to: a) discuss several current uses of Administrative Portfolios for the emerging administrator and the administrative practitioner, b) report the findings of a survey of California school superintendents and personnel managers on the suggested content of Administrative Portfolios, and c) describe the use of the Administrative Portfolio for the induction, development, and assessment of administrative credential candidates at California State University, Fresno.

### Current Uses of Administrative Portfolios

An administrative portfolio is a demonstration of one's professional self, a representation of one's ability, knowledge, and performance, used for one's own growth or presented to a select audience. The first audience is the owner of the portfolio. Administrators select the most meaningful work to be placed in the portfolio; reflection is the next crucial step to growth and change of behavior. Guaglianone (1996) identifies seven goals in portfolio development for administrators:

1. Learn to be reflective about the administrator's own practice of education administration,
2. Be able to conceptualize one's role as an administrator,
3. Be able to present one's successes using a clear and concise format,
4. Identify strengths and weaknesses,
5. Take charge of one's professional growth and development,
6. Be an example for teachers and others, and
7. Be ready to apply for a job or promotion.

The key elements of this process for the administrator include reflection, conceptualization, presentation, identification, planning one's own learning, and modeling for teachers, students, and others. If one is pursuing a job change, then the process of developing a portfolio is beneficial in preparing the administrator to respond skillfully and knowledgeably to interview questions.

Three types of portfolios are being used by administrators and in education administration programs: the Professional Development Portfolio, the Career Advancement Portfolio, and the Evaluation Portfolio. Following is a brief discussion of each type.

1. The Professional Development Portfolio is used by the administrator to monitor individual growth, to identify strengths and weaknesses in professional training and development, and to assess one's practice as an educational administrator. Significant in the personal assessment of one's professional development is the writing of reflections, the attempt to learn from one's work, and the assignment of value to particular

activities and learning experiences. This portfolio is usually a comprehensive collection of work, projects, reports, evaluations, and other items which may be so numerous to as need storage space in boxes or file drawers. The administrator, however, selects from the larger collection the artifacts that best represent his or her work in given areas and these become the Professional Development Portfolio. This portfolio may or may not be shared: in some school districts, administrators work in peer partnerships or small groups, in which case, colleagues would see and give feedback on the portfolio.

The Professional Development Portfolio, sometimes called a program portfolio, is the one begun in an Education Administration program. Steps in developing such a portfolio are described under Application in an Education Administration Program.

2. The Career Advancement Portfolio is a unique method of presenting administrative strengths, skills, and accomplishments. A selection of material and artifacts from the Professional Development Portfolio is used when one is making a presentation of oneself at a job or promotional interview. Reflective comments may or may not be included in this version of the portfolio: some administrators add brief explanations of reasons for inclusion on a card or small piece of paper which is attached to the pertinent page in the portfolio.

The artifacts for the Career Advancement Portfolio are usually tailored to a specific position and can be seen as an expansion of the letter of application and resume. The portfolio's organizational headings could include: Leadership experiences; Curriculum and instruction experiences; Student, parent, and community interactions; Presentations and committees; Professional growth, staff development experiences, and training; Performance evaluations; and Accolades (Brown & Irby, 1997). Evans (1996) proposes a somewhat different list of categories: Philosophy of Education, Resume Highlights, Professional Goals, Professional Development, Leadership Skills and Development, Organizational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, School Community Initiatives, Professional Endeavors, Professional Honors, Performance Evaluation, Letters of Commendation, and Professional Enrichment Log.

The Career Advancement Portfolio not only provides evidence of experiences and successes, it can also assist the applicant in the interview preparation, as the applicant is reminded of important projects and successful endeavors that can be incorporated into four or five main areas of focus. And a final look through the portfolio as one is waiting for the interview is a fine way to build confidence and be reminded of one's talents and skills (Yerkes and Basom, 1998).

3. Given the changing role of the principal, the Evaluation Portfolio is beginning to be used as an alternative method of evaluating administrators. This type of visual evaluation tool takes into account changing expectations of constituents, traditional problems with isolation of site administrators, and long-standing concerns about the value of traditional evaluation methods for administrators. As teachers and students can become more reflective and critical when they choose the documents by which they and others can evaluate work, the same is true for administrators. Portfolios, in the formative stage, can provide administrators with opportunities to review, reflect, and analyze past events. Providing direction for improved decision making, problem analysis, communication, interactions with community and staff, management, and leadership are all benefits of a carefully constructed Evaluation Portfolio. In the summative stage, the administrator and the supervisor can jointly examine the portfolio, compare work accomplished with planned goals and objectives, analyze the

quality of the work, and determine further plans for the administrator's effectiveness and growth.

A 1998 telephone interview of twenty California school district personnel offices identified only one district that uses administrative portfolios for administrator assessment. It seems that the same constructivist benefits realized by students and teachers in the development of portfolios could, however, be experienced by administrators who develop an administrative Evaluation Portfolio.

The main benefit of the Evaluation Portfolio is the control the administrator has over what is presented and what is not presented as part of the district evaluation. The process would begin prior to the beginning of the academic school year. The administrator would plan the year, reflect upon the previous year's successes and failures, and set organizational goals and professional development goals for the upcoming year. An interview would occur with the immediate supervisor to discuss the plan for the year, the personal reflections of the administrator being evaluated, and the goals which have been developed. This process could include formal or informal mentoring, further planning, discussion of strategies to implement plans and goals, and other professional development interactions. The outcome of this meeting would be a professional development plan for implementing organizational, individual, and professional goals, agreed to and signed by both individuals.

As the year progresses, the administrator would collect artifacts which demonstrate competency in the areas identified in the plan and in the goals agreed upon with the district supervisor. Other items of competency may be identified by the administrator and added to the portfolio. Finally, for evaluation, only items agreed upon at the initial meeting would be evaluated. During the evaluation interview the administrator would demonstrate how specific goals were met, what worked, and what was not successful during the year. Other items which were not considered as part of the plan may be included in the discussion if desired by the administrator being evaluated, and professional discussion would provide opportunity for mentoring, correction, or other appropriate evaluative action. This process provides the foundation for the administrator to construct meaning out of practice, to understand how different facets of practice are interconnected to the individual's personal and professional self. Personal reflection has a concrete basis if the artifacts in the portfolio are used to evaluate practice, identify patterns of behavior, and incorporate transformational change into one's practice of educational administration.

#### Report of a Study of California School Superintendents and Personnel Officers on the Suggested Content of Administrative Portfolios

Thirty-five California school district superintendents or directors of personnel returned questionnaires responding to desirable artifacts to include in a Career Advancement Portfolio (Guaglianone, 1996). Thirty respondents indicated that a portfolio would provide ". . . specific information such as scope of training, examples of experiences, duties, responsibilities, and practical experiences not necessarily identified in a job interview" (p. 236). Respondents also suggested that more information is better and with a portfolio, candidates would be able to provide a visual dimension to their answers which may be beneficial in a competitive job interview.

Areas of leadership, instruction, and the learning environment were identified by Guaglianone as domains of administrative competency ranked highest by respondents to be demonstrated in the administrative portfolio. Artifacts which could be used to

demonstrate these domains include: evidence of leadership in professional development, participation by the individual in professional development, sample teacher evaluations conducted by the individual, and evaluation reports of the individual's administrative service. Other items could be samples of parent correspondence, community service and leadership, samples of teacher and student success as a result of the individual's leadership. Guaglianone reports that the overall recommendation of the respondents was to have a well organized portfolio demonstrating the highest level of quality both in practice and in presentation.

### Application in an Educational Administration Program

The above study and other research (Yerkes, Weikle, & Twitty, 1995; Brown & Irby, 1997; and others) provide a framework for the current uses of an administrative portfolio for the prospective and practicing administrator at California State University, Fresno. Students pursuing an Education Administration Credential begin a Professional Development Portfolio during the first semester of course work and continue to build the portfolio throughout the duration of both tiers of the Administrative Services Credential Program. The credentialing process may be completed in a minim of four years; therefore, students spend at least 8 semesters, and in most cases 8 to 12 semesters constructing a Professional Development Portfolio which is used to demonstrate the individual's professional administrative competence at a final demonstration and assessment meeting.

During the four semesters of the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential program, students attend a sequence of courses in cohorts. The cohort model, introducing a different full-time faculty member to the students in each of the first three semesters, and the sequential nature of the coursework allow the faculty to know and mentor the students and to carefully monitor and advise each developmental stage of the administrative portfolio. The following describes each stage of the portfolio development process.

#### Preliminary Administrative Services Credential

##### Semester 1

The first step is the development of Section 1 of the Professional Development Portfolio— Individual Development. This section includes a resume, autobiography, and written professional and personal goals.

Students are provided a carefully designed resume template which they are required to replicate with their own information. The purpose of the template is to insure that all vital professional information about the emerging administrator becomes part of the resume.

The autobiography is used to help trigger memories about one's personal life which have become the foundation of one's professional self. Students are sometimes not aware of the implications of childhood and family circumstances and how they effect one's adult life and carry over into professional relationships. Student mentoring, at this stage, includes helping the student acknowledge all of life's circumstances. Some students require assistance recognizing the positive as well as the negative experiences in their lives. Through writing and reflecting on the autobiography some students realize they use their past as an excuse, they may carry blame from past experiences, and some have residual anger resulting from past experiences. Students must learn to acknowledge their pasts and declare their independence from experiences which may inhibit their

success in professional pursuits. Positive experiences also need to be acknowledged and highlighted through mentoring and discussion between faculty members and the student. These experiences become strengths and confidence boosters in the emerging administrator's professional growth and development.

The final component of the Individual Development section during the first semester is the writing of personal and professional goals. Students need to learn to develop a clear picture of goals which they would like to accomplish. At this level, many students tend to think in general terms and have a difficult time isolating specific attainable goals. Writing goals becomes an exercise with personal and professional benefit. Students learn to think precisely and develop the skill of identifying and conceptualizing specifics about their lives. These specifics are then translated into attainable and measurable goals. This same skill is necessary in working with a school staff to identify, develop, and attain organizational goals.

### Semester 2

The second semester is when the framework of the portfolio is developed. The majority of the portfolio work is conducted in the Educational Leadership Course. Students are required to acquire a three ring binder with four main sections: Section 1 - Individual Development; Section 2 - Knowledge Base; Section 3 - Professional Development, and; Section 4 - Community Involvement.

In Section 1, students continue documentation of their administrative development. The carefully constructed resume is expanded and becomes the individualized work of the student. Several resume samples are provided, and students are encouraged to develop a resume style which supports their individual character, although the vital professional information of the first semester template must be maintained.

Students are asked to begin gathering letters of recommendation from supervisors. Three letters are recommended from a variety of levels of administrative supervisors, including one letter from a superintendent or an assistant. Transcripts are added to the portfolio this semester, a current copy for their own record as well as a set of sealed transcripts in case an opportunity arises where an official set is needed immediately. The autobiography is reviewed and updated and becomes a source of information and discussion between this faculty member and the student.

The second section of the portfolio—Knowledge Base— is documentation of the student's professional competency. This section is used to help the student see that professional progress is taking place. In the abstract setting of studying school administration, weeks and months could pass without evidence of any success. Artifacts in this section highlight accomplishments and provide encouragement for the emerging administrator. This section may include students' field work assignments which demonstrate administrative experience, professional writing, involvement in professional organizations, class presentations, grant proposals, professional presentations, and other artifacts which demonstrate administrative skills. Students are encouraged to find representative material which evidence competence in areas of visionary leadership, cultural leadership, instructional leadership, managerial, collaborative community leadership, moral leadership, and leadership in the areas of politics, society, economics, law, and culture. These are the standards required by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing to be taught in all education administration programs.

Section 3 of the Professional Development Portfolio is titled Professional Development.

This section requires documentation of efforts the student is making toward professional growth. The written professional goals identify the types of professional activities the student and their mentor feel should become part of their professional training and on-going growth as an administrator. Students may include an annotated bibliography of professional reading. Professional course work engaged in by the student as well as workshops or inservices, conferences attended, and specialized training may be included. These demonstrate application for the student and selected audiences of a philosophy of life-long learning.

Community Involvement is the fourth section of the Professional Development Portfolio. Individuals involved in community building efforts in one community will probably be involved in similar activities in a new community. Boards of Education, who usually make final administrative hiring decisions, generally prefer candidates who will represent the school district in community building activities. Students are encouraged to get involved and begin keeping records of community service. A common student complaint is lack of time experienced at this busy time in their lives. That is acknowledged by the professor, and students are assisted in discovering that many hours are already spent in community service and that they need to learn to document volunteer activities. Students usually can procure evidence of service to education beyond their scope of contractual duties: they serve as coaches, mentors, and community volunteers. Many are involved in teaching at their churches and synagogues, volunteering on building projects, and serving at other membership and leadership levels. An index of voluntary services activities is helpful in this section. Awards for community service provide documentation and letters of appreciation for service are appropriate to include.

### Semester 3

The third semester of course work includes updating and adding to each of the four sections of the Professional Development Portfolio. At this point, the third faculty member meets the students, becomes familiar with their portfolios, and begins again the process of mentoring each students. A new item, an Educational Platform, is added to the Individual Development section of the portfolio. Students are required to reflect upon, write, and present about their core beliefs about the profession of education. The Educational Platform is a written representation of their practice as a professional educator and is useful in job interviews and later in their work as administrators. Most express gratitude for having been encouraged to think precisely and clearly about their values and beliefs and, then, to have an opportunity to practice presenting those beliefs before an audience of their peers. The Educational Platform is added to the portfolio; the resume, letters of recommendation, and all items in this section are reviewed and updated as needed.

Field work assignments and other professional responsibilities allow the student to add documentation to the knowledge base section of the portfolio. Evidence of participation in workshops, inservices, and training are added to the Professional Development Section. Additional certificates, awards, and letters are added to the Community Involvement section. The additions to the portfolio add to the confidence level of the emerging administrator and clearly demonstrate professional growth and the completion of professional goals.

During this semester students are encouraged to develop a placement file with the Career Development Office on campus. A representative makes a presentation to students during class time. The time and energy expended on the portfolio is validated by the Career

Advisor, and specific instructions are provided about how to use more effectively the work they already have developed as they seek employment in administration.

#### Semester 4

The final semester of the Preliminary Administrative Services Credential Program is usually when most students complete the Master of Arts Degree in Education, Administration and Supervision, a requirement at CSU Fresno to receive the credential. They complete the final course in the program, Site Based Leadership. Many are diligently involved in leadership activities in their school, even though they are no longer in Field Work classes, and most are still teaching full time. Most students receive the Certificate of Administrative Eligibility, which allows them to search for a position, at the end of the fourth semester. The administrative portfolio becomes an invaluable tool at this point in their careers.

The Individual Development section begins to make sense because everything students need to apply for a job is already gathered and current. The Knowledge Base section provides evidence of their competency of administrative skill. Students are able to speak with profound confidence because they have evidence of successful accomplishments which demonstrate how students in their school have benefited from their leadership. The Professional Development section provides specific evidence of individual learning and growth, documented and ready to present in their letter of application and as part of their job interview. Finally, students are thankful that they have begun to document and collect evidence of community involvement. This makes strong candidates even stronger as they apply for those first administrative positions.

All of the artifacts in the portfolio are updated and discussed with the faculty as well as with colleagues in the Site Based Leadership Class. Peers offer suggestions, students share and celebrate successes, and students discuss how to document something that did not turn out too well. All of these are important steps in the on-going professional growth realized by the process of building the Administrative Portfolio.

#### Professional Administrative Services Credential

The 24 -unit Professional Administrative Services Credential Program continues the work students began earlier on the administrative portfolio. Students in the first semester of the Professional Credential Program, available only when they have received their first administrative position, take a two-unit course entitled, Professional Development Induction. Students gather three data sources, including scores from a written knowledge based test, scores from a principals' assessment center, and the latest district summative evaluation. All of these data are analyzed and used to develop a Professional Development Plan which determines courses and professional development activities the student will pursue to complete the remaining 22 units of the Professional Credential Program.

The Professional Development Plan, once completed by the student, with the assistance of the faculty advisor, and signed-off by the student, the university advisor, and the district mentor, becomes part of the Individual Development section of the administrative portfolio. Each semester in the Professional Credential Program, students update, modify, and add to the portfolio, and it indeed becomes a professional work which clearly and skillfully represents an administrator with self-knowledge and demonstrated, continued professional growth.

The primary purpose of the portfolio is to assist the administrator in developing a better knowledge and understanding of one's professional self. Reflection, hard work, and an

accurate knowledge of one's competencies pay high dividends at this stage of the administrator's career. Recalling Bennis' (1989) comments about successful leaders, that one common ingredient of transformational leadership is self knowledge, students and faculty generally agree that self-knowledge and a powerful representation of their work have been developed. At this point, students in the Professional Credential Program are often seeking a second administrative job. Many are moving from assistant and associate positions to principalships and even some to district leadership. Self knowledge and the ability to demonstrate one's professional career have become an added advantage for students in the CSU, Fresno Administrative Credential Program.

The final use of the Professional Development Portfolio is an Exit Interview as the culminating activity of the credentialing process. During the last semester in the Professional Credential Program, students enroll in a course entitled, Professional Development Assessment. This course is designed to provide individual mentoring and support by the same university advisor who helped with the development of the Professional Development Plan. Students review all sections of the portfolio, discussing their professional goals, and confirming that all of the components of the Professional Development Plan, located in the first section of the Portfolio, have been accomplished. At the close of the semester, a group meeting is held where students present their portfolio to a panel of peers, professors, their district supervisor, and other local practitioners. Students respond to a series of questions and skillfully use their Professional Development Portfolio, a four-year compilation of their work, to demonstrate their competence as an administrator. If successfully presented, the candidate is recommended for the Professional Clear Administrative Services Credential.

### Summary

Review of the literature, the initial study of 35 district officials, and the development of the administrative portfolio as an important part of the education administration curriculum have convinced the authors, and other faculty, of the value of continuing the effort. At present, the initial final demonstrations and interviews are being scheduled. Research continues on the validity of the three assessment devices for determining the developmental needs of future and practicing administrators. The addition of elective courses and other opportunities for development for professional credential level students is continuing. Work remains to be done; however, the revised program, with the inclusion of the administrative portfolio throughout eight semesters, seems to strengthen students' self knowledge, reflective skills, and broad understanding of the education administration knowledge base. More important, students are leaving the program, finding positions, and achieving success in those positions with a sense of confidence, enhanced knowledge of self, an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, specific goals and plans, and a commitment to continuing professional development.

Future research will be conducted based on input from conference participants in the use of portfolios for district evaluation, job interviews, and modeling for teacher portfolio development. Recommendations will focus on the desirability of continuing the use of professional administrative portfolios at all levels of the educational process.

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