What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a concrete way of introducing your child to new people involved in his or her life and for keeping important information organized and easily accessible.

What's the best way to create a portfolio?

To begin, you will need to choose an organizational system, such as a binder with dividers, multi-pocket presentation folder, or whatever works best for you. You will need to add information as your child grows and develops, so the system you choose must keep contents secure, allow you to add items and to present them in a clear organized way. The goal is to present the most complete picture possible of your child to the person or persons reviewing the portfolio.

What kind of information should I include in my child's portfolio?

The goal is to present as complete a picture as possible of your child. The type and amount of information you include to accomplish this goal is up to you. Here are some suggestions:

One page profile: A one-sided sheet designed to quickly and easily present what is important to your child and how to best support him or her in a school environment. (See the information sheet on *Creating a One Page Profile*).

Work samples: Art work (e.g. drawings, paintings) and other paper type activities that reflect your child's skills across as many areas as possible.

Photographs:
- Things that your child has made;
- Your child engaged in favourite activities;

Helpful hints to include:
- Strategies you use to encourage and teach your child;
- Favorite toys and comfort/calming items;
- Home routines or family traditions;
- What you do to foster success.

Community agencies: List each therapist, preschool resource teacher/consultant, agency, early childhood setting, etc. that your family is involved with. Include a brief description of what each person does with your child, frequency of contact, and contact information (phone number, email).

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Reports and assessments:
- Current written reports* and recommendations;
- The most current Individual Program Plan (IPP) from the early childhood setting your child attends;
- Progress reports and checklists from the preschool program;
- Results from screening tools (e.g. Nipissing Developmental Screen, Ages and Stages Questionnaire) or screening clinics (e.g. speech and hearing assessments);
- Summaries from therapy sessions;
- Discharge reports from agencies or exit report card from early childhood settings;
- List of specialized equipment;
- Relevant or legal custody information.

*You may choose to only include recommendations specific to your child and exclude information of a personal or private nature.

Resources: A few choice websites or articles relevant to your child's needs.

Here are some helpful tips for creating a portfolio:
- Plan so the final portfolio can be reviewed within fifteen minutes - remember that school personnel are very busy, especially at the beginning of the school year when they are getting to know all the new children;
- Make a list of information you are thinking of including in the portfolio and group it into categories such as, child and photos, screenings and assessments, preschool program reports, medical information, etc.;
- Organize the portfolio into sections so information can be easily located;
- Include only the most current and relevant information;
- Label and provide brief descriptions of your child's work, artwork, achievements or activities.
- Involve your child in developing parts of the portfolio;
- Be as creative as you want. Use colour and graphics to easily convey information while not distracting from what you are communicating (a picture is truly worth a thousand words).

How is a portfolio different from a parent information binder?
A portfolio is designed to be given to the school staff who will be welcoming your child, whereas a parent information binder is your binder of information. Although similar information will be found in both, the portfolio and parent information binder, the portfolio is a summary or condensed version of the most pertinent information you have stored in your parent information binder. (See the information sheet on *Creating a Parent Information Binder*).

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