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Portfolio Purposes: Teachers Exploring the Relationship Between Evaluation and Learning

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This article describes the ways two second grade teachers implement portfolio assessment in their classrooms. It emphasizes multiple purposes for evaluation such as judging performance and progress toward predetermined goals, providing responses that help children identify, clarify, and progress toward self-selected goals, and generating narrative accounts of students as self-aware learners. The article also suggests that portfolio use can have a direct influence on teachers' instructional practices and beliefs.

Purposes for creating a portfolio vary in response to different learning situations. From our readings and interactions with teachers who are using portfolio evaluation, we have found that different metaphors are connected with diverse portfolio purposes. Many regard portfolios as tools for teachers and students to document evidence of learning and progress toward curricular (Scheu, Kawakami, & Herman 1990; Simmons, 1991; Valencia, 1990; Wolf, 1989). Others describe portfolios as contexts where teachers learn more about their students enabling them to provide responses that promote individual growth (Cambourne & Turbill, 1990; Henning-Stout, 1994; Milliken, 1992; Voss, 1992). Portfolios are also characterized as portraits, stories, or histories of students as literate persons (Graves, 1992; Hansen, 1992a; Kieffer & Morrison, 1994; Rief, 1990). Portfolios can serve purposes as diverse as providing reliable assessments, generating contexts for individual growth, and telling stories of one's life (Callahan, 1995; Kieffer & Faust, 1994; Murphy, 1994)

Portfolios also reflect classroom curriculum, teaching, and learning (Ar-

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ter & Spandel, 1992; Johnston, 1989; Kieffer & Morrison, 1994; Murphy, 1994; Porter & Cleland, 1995; Valencia & Calfee, 1991). Many teachers are searching for ways to improve their teaching practices by examining their theoretical beliefs. In an attempt to gather evidence from diverse sources and listen to multiple voices, they have come to value reactions and questions from parents and students, observations and critiques from peers, and time to write and reflect about their work (Graves, 1992; Hansen, 1992b; Paris & Ayres, 1994; Schon, 1987). Portfolios can contain information that supports professional growth, self-awareness, and change. Listening to teachers talk about their assessment alternatives can add to our knowledge of the relationship between portfolio evaluation and teaching practices (Gomez, Graue, & Bloch, 1991).

Linda Morrison and Beverly Copeland, two second grade teachers from different counties in rural Georgia, began exploring portfolio assessment over a year ago (permission was granted to use their real names). Along with 15 other teachers (kindergarten through ninth-grade), they agreed to join us in conducting a year-long study investigating portfolios as potential catalysts for teacher change (Kieffer & Faust, 1994). Our methodology was based on monthly classroom observations and interviews in which we invited the teachers to participate in documenting and reflecting upon their use of portfolios to plan for and evaluate teaching and learning. Research questions that guided our study were: (a) How might the process of creating a portfolio support evaluation of language learning in Grades K-9? (b) How are teachers and students using portfolios in their classrooms? (c) How have these practices altered the teaching/learning environment in the classroom?

We interviewed each teacher starting at the beginning of their school year using open-ended questions (e.g., What is a portfolio to you? What is its purpose? How are you using portfolios in your classroom?). Throughout the interviews and our classroom observations, we encouraged the teachers to elaborate informally on their ideas concerning learning and evaluation. We were especially interested in noting connections between decisions regarding portfolio use and each teacher's overall stance toward evaluation in language arts classrooms.

Data were narrowed and analyzed following a preliminary coding procedure (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). Approximately 40 hours of transcribed data were imported into an Apple database management system called FileMaker II and sorted in a method similar to the index card method mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The format for this analysis was first developed in a funded research project through The Ohio State University in conjunction with Apple Computers Inc. (Tierney, Kieffer, Stowell, Desai, Whalin, & Moss, 1992). We read the transcripts, grouping ideas

together, assigning categories, and generating subcategories under each category heading (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The following is an example of one of our main categories with subcategories and teacher quotes:

ME—Metaphors	
01 tool	"they used it as their grading tool"
02 evidence	"the portfolio helps us to open up our ways of gathering evidence"
03 proof	"proof that I've learned it"
04 scrapbook	"It will be like their scrapbook kind of at the end of the year"
05 growth	"being able to show them their growth"
06 story	"focus on the stories of individual children"
07 credit	"information that you could give them credit for"
08 picture	"value in collecting things so that you can get a picture of yourself"
09 reflection	"reflection of what children are in our classroom"
10 change	"it would certainly be valuable personally to have a record of changes"
11 track	"used to track student progress"
12 refrigerator	"like the old refrigerator as portfolio"
13 construction	"I think it builds their self-esteem"
14 memories	"having these things to help create memories"
15 collection	"guide them toward a collection"

This category enabled us to begin thinking about the metaphorical expressions the teachers were using to talk about portfolios, and how these metaphors were connected with assumptions about learning and evaluation. Our continued discussions during data collection and analysis led us to focus on other basic questions about underlying purposes for evaluation: What is the relationship between evaluation and learning? How are teachers' metaphorical orientations connected with their sense of the purpose of portfolios? How have the teachers' conceptualizations of learning changed over the past year? Codes emerged about the purposes for evaluation that the teachers were using in their conversations about learning and evaluation. The following are examples of these codes with quotes from the teacher participants:

EV—Evaluation Purposes

01 judging—product—performance/ranking/gatekeeping Example—Nora (11/24/92) I really think they [9th graders] understand performance, they understand that this writing is also a performance just like running a 100 yard dash, just like doing the best cheer, just like drawing the best picture.

02 response—process—growth Example—Betsy (10/30/92) I used to just look at numbers in a grade book, now you can look more at the process rather than the end result. I think that's the main thing the portfolios have done for me, pay attention to the process, and the progress instead of the final outcome

03 narrative accounting—self-evaluation—story Example—Hannah (11/18/92) I'm hoping that the freshman will begin to be introspective, think about what it is that they're doing, and why they're doing it, and what they hope to gain from it, instead of "Well I am going to do this because this is what the teacher wants?" What the teacher wants is for you to find out what you are all about as far as your learning is concerned. My subject matter is kind of superfluous to the story in that respect.

We then used FileMaker II to sort these data into clusters of related codes. The database management system allowed the viewing and reviewing of ideas that fit together causing refinement and clarification of original headings.

Initially, the teachers focused on the notion that portfolios created by children for the purpose of evaluating learning might function as an alternative to more familiar evaluation tools such as tests, checklists, and written essays (Belanoff & Dickson, 1991; Graves & Sunstein, 1992; Hansen, 1992; Rief, 1992; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991; Valencia, 1990). When we first interviewed the teachers, they expressed hope that experimenting with portfolio assessment might result in less emphasis on standardized, competitive methods for defining what would count as success in their classrooms. As a group, the teachers showed a willingness to reconsider the role of evaluation in schooling. They longed for more flexible methods for recognizing what their students know and are capable of doing. Portfolios, they hoped, would enable them to do a better job of evaluating student performance and progress.

One of our principal findings was that portfolio use tended to complicate not simplify the task of evaluation for the teachers in our study. Instead of a solution to a problem, they began to see the problem in a new way (Kieffer & Faust, 1994). Over time the teachers became more interested in viewing portfolios as supporting evaluation that is ongoing and formative rather than in finding alternatives to tests, checklists, and other

types of summative evaluation. Questions emerged that focused on learning. What are individual children learning in particular classrooms? How and why are these children learning? What evidence exists to support the claim that children are indeed learning what they need to be learning at a particular time?

The teachers in this study began to look upon student portfolios as important sources of information upon which to base curricular decisions. They began to realize that questions about what a portfolio might or should look like are premature if they have not been preceded by questions focused on learning. Consequently, they gravitated toward what Hansen (1992c) describes as a "literacy portfolio," one in which teachers and children collaborate over time to build a rich description of literacy learning. The teachers in our study tended to view literacy portfolios as supplementing rather than replacing standardized, summative types of evaluation. In the classrooms we observed, teachers and students selected and arranged evidence of learning. Then, as children composed reflections exploring the meaning of this evidence, what appeared at first to be merely work folders or scrap books evolved into powerful documents representing each child as an emergent, self-aware learner. We found that what individual teachers and students did with this information varied according to what the overall purpose for evaluation was understood to be in particular classrooms.

A more detailed examination of these realizations unfolded by listening to the stories of Linda and Beverly as they implemented portfolio evaluation in their second grade classrooms. We decided to continue meeting with them for a second year. During that time, we looked closely at their statements during interviews, examined their students' portfolios, observed their classroom interactions, and collected reflective writing. This article focuses on how these two teachers began to use portfolios as a way of constructing their role as educators and as learners. First we will draw upon our interview and observation data to describe how portfolio use influenced the way Linda and Beverly reflect on multiple purposes for evaluation as well as potential connections between evaluation and learning. Then we will summarize our findings concerning evaluation purposes that inform teacher decisions about how to use portfolios in their classrooms. To conclude, we will offer a few principles to guide others who, like Linda and Beverly, may wish to design their own approach to portfolio use.

LINDA REFLECTS ON EVALUATION AND LEARNING

In a graduate level course on whole language during the summer of 1992, Linda wrote a proposal for a research project that she would conduct during the next school year. Her project goals meshed nicely with the

research that we were planning, so Linda invited us into her classroom to observe the process. In her proposal, Linda wrote:

> Linda (07/22/92) I am most interested in research during the upcoming year. The question guiding my study might then be "how does alternative assessment effect classroom instruction?" My goal for the upcoming year might be to begin using reading and writing assessment results to determine instruction.

Along with her second grade students, Linda attempted to collect evidence of literacy learning from multiple sources such as writing in progress, responses to literature, and informal discussions about books. Although she initially described portfolios as collections of students' work, primarily for her use as an evaluation tool, she realized the importance of students becoming more actively involved in the process. Early on, Linda saw concrete proof that portfolios revealed writing progress over time, but she was interested in students' progress in reading as well, and she felt that reading and writing response held the evidence for that progress.

> Linda (writing, 08/06/92) I'd like to "archive" more evidence of reading progress, other than IRI's (Informal Reading Inventories), running records, and such. I'm still searching for ways to document response to reading! I feel the need to "beef up" reading portfolios. They don't include much evidence of student "products." . . . . . I'd like students to have more input, but *getting* that input now is pretty much hit or miss. I don't yet have a very systematic way of getting *all* students involved . . . . . Perhaps the students will have more input concerning response, more "ownership" of the products they produce.

By October, Linda's students had been collecting items from reading and writing workshop that represented evidence of their growth over time. Portfolio collections, at this point in the year, included: (a) student selected items—drafts of writing on self-selected topics (see Figure 1), written responses to literature, book logs, written reflections/self-evaluations; (b) teacher observations—teaching journal notes (see Figure 2), running records, reading/writing strategy checklists; and, (c) informal reading inventories.

Linda initiated the process of exploring reflection and selection by asking questions, seeking information from students, and experimenting with ways to model the process.

> Linda (10/08/92) I am working on getting students to make informed weekly portfolio selections. When we share portfolios in large groups, I model my way of selecting pieces for the week. In small group sharing, I asked students to spread out their pieces. I am worried about leading the students to specific

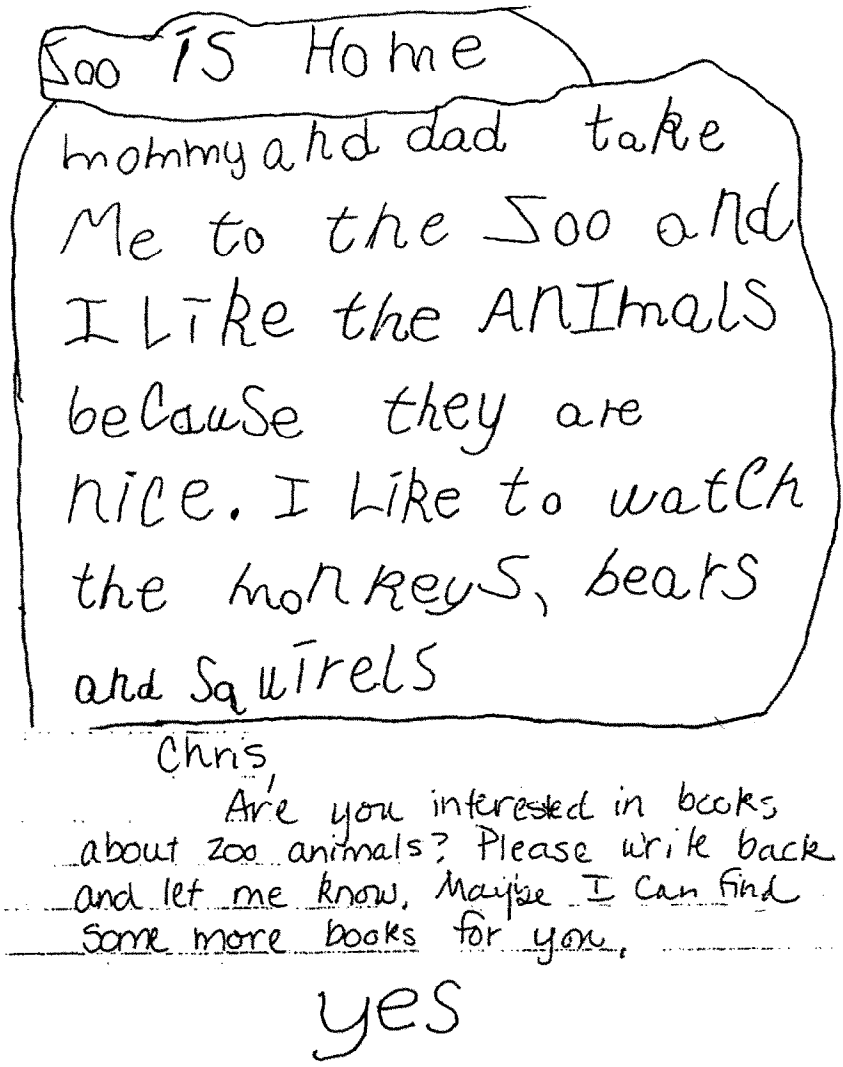

Figure 1. Student selected portfolio item.

responses. But some students will be able to share their portfolios on their own and write some reflections.

Linda grouped her students in pairs with their portfolios spread out on the floor and asked them to explain reasons behind their portfolio selections.

Linda moved about the room and recorded conversations in her teaching journal. For example, Amy and Clay discussed the selection process in rich detail.

Amy: I picked this one because I liked the title. It goes good with the story. I told more about my dolls, like I put them in a row and play school, and I'm the teacher. I thought it was a real good story, because it's what I really do at home.

Clay: Yeah. I like that part about the dolls, too. [he turns around to speak to his teacher] I can just see Amy being the teacher, can't you? [he turns back to Amy] Your picture is nice, too. Those dolls are all sitting on the bed.

Amy: Yeah, that's like their table at school. They all sit together.

Clay: I might pick that story about my trampoline. That's what I do a lot after school.

Linda's concern for student ownership extended to choices about audience—with whom to share, when, and how often. She believed that portfolio creators should also control the content of their reflections. Ultimately, her students benefited from giving and receiving meaningful responses to their work. They connected with each other, learning the meaning of collaboration, understanding different points of view, recognizing strengths, clarifying positions, and negotiating change. Because of the importance of responding as a context for supporting growth, Linda kept narrative records in her response journal about individual student's reactions during these portfolio sharings. One such record was written following her read aloud of "Amazing Grace" by Mary Hoffman. She recorded students' responses to the story—"Her eyes look like Kelley's." "I like her." "She used the socks to make spider legs." and linked the discussion to portfolios.

We had a good discussion about portfolios afterwards—basically it was *me* telling them that they were all "amazing" like Grace and had stories to tell. They pulled Lori [the student teacher] into the discussion. Jim Carson asked me [Linda] to read my story "The Hearse" to her. Lori asked some good questions in her journal. I really like doing this together. Later, Jenny asked, "Can I get your story, 'The Hearse' and copy it?

Linda's suggestion that they each "had stories to tell" guided her students toward building narrative accounts of their life experiences within their portfolios. This sharing exchange made a strong connection among favorite books and highlighted Linda as a writer within this reading and writing community.

2/21 Port. activity:
passed out Term portfolios -
talked about WHY we have these,
WHAT they tell us.
Asked them to:
* ① Tell me what you think about
your portfolio
- they got right to work on this!
- quite a few wanted to share.
* ② What does your Port. tell a
teacher about what you can do
when you read and write?
- this was harder - Cody = "That's
a lot to write about."

They seemed very interested
& involved. Lots of comments
like
"Wow - I've got 12 things in
here! I've kept a LOT" (Paxton)

"I think it's great!"

Figure 2. Teaching Journal Notes

Midway through the year, Linda attempted to link information from student portfolios with instruction. She restructured her personal response journal to include five sections: reflections, questions, observations, mini-lesson ideas and revisions, and miscellaneous data. She wanted to make it easier to analyze and categorize data and document ways in which assessment informs instruction. By March, she hoped to include more informal assessment methods to help add richness to her students' portfolios.

> Linda (03/18/93) I would like to tape record each of my students reading orally three times during the year. I would also like to interview them three times during the year, to discover their perceptions of themselves as readers and writers. Recording some of the interactions that occur in response to literature, in book discussions, and during conferences would be ideal. All of these could be transcribed for inclusion in portfolios.

In Linda's classroom, assessment information was embedded within the context of the classroom community. Periodic transcriptions of students' read alouds, spontaneous comments during author sharing, and conversations about books captured the students' ongoing, dynamic, and shifting learning processes. These portfolios contained rich stories about students in ways very different from most assessment information.

By the end of the school year, Linda had succeeded in finding ways to document her students' engagement with writing and reading. In an interview in June, she talked about using written narratives to make points about students' learning. She recorded anecdotal notes that she had made throughout the year and summarized her perceptions about each child as a reader and writer.

> (Writing Journal) This came from a child that I thought was kind of marginally involved in all of this, and it's a child who has struggled so much with reading and writing and had I not asked this question, and had I not gotten this information, I may not have found out how important portfolios are. She said, "I'm glad that this class has portfolios and how I write may not be good, but I think it is. Sometimes I know if I can spend all my time writing for pieces about the old days, the old days, that's what a portfolio is about."

Linda noted students talking about themselves as writers in teacher/student conferences, responding to literature that was read aloud in class or independently, and orally self-evaluating their reading and writing for the purpose of collaboratively summarizing their growth over time. Some of these students responses were:

1) I love to write. Writing is my favorite thing in class. I like portfolios because we put our papers in it.

2) I think I am really catching on. My handwriting is getting better every time I look at it.

3) You can see that I love to draw.

4) I have got better at spelling.

5) I love writing my dreams.

6) My portfolio can tell other people that I can spell a lot of words, but not always.

Linda also began to explore an analogy between teaching and parenting. She reflected on how she thought about her own children's' growth as users of language and imagined a similar way of relating with her students. She used a "refrigerator metaphor" to describe that place where learners, parents, and teachers can observe growth over time.

> Linda (06/04/93) I want a reflection of my children as literate beings, and I want the teachers to understand them as unique people, and I want teachers who are tuned-in to what makes my children tick and what makes them different from the child they sit next too. I want proof that their teachers know these things about my children, and I want proof in a way that I can understand..... It's like the old refrigerator as portfolio deal. You save the best stuff, and the things that really get your attention, and then a few years later we pull it out and say "Oh, look what you did in the second grade, and now you're in fifth grade. I'll bet you'd write this story completely differently if you wrote it now." I don't want a sheet with test scores and no inkling from the teacher. If I had complete freedom as far as assessment, there wouldn't be a whole lot of testing. I'd probably do collecting and reflecting on that collection with a good bit of information from my head going into each reflection.

Linda spent her time documenting assessment information that emerged directly from the classroom context. She recounted students' reactions to their own reading and writing, analyzed their questions, examined the types of books they read, and categorized the topics they chose to write about. By including this information in the portfolios and sharing it with her students, Linda helped them build portfolios that told stories of continual learners.

In September of the second year of our study, Linda was still struggling with issues such as ownership, reflection, and personal connection. Having the students create portfolios inspired Linda to ask more questions, face new challenges, and set new goals. Linda tried sharing aspects of her life as a learner to model selection of portfolio items.

> Linda (09/09/93) I would like my students to have more ownership, but I'm not sure that I've done a very effective job of communicating that to them. I thought well, if I tried it, if I started it then they'll see how I go through

> selections. They'll see how hard it can be for me at times. I have some information on my bulletin board right now about me and it's got pictures of me as a second grader and some work that my mother saved. And I thought well, maybe that's a very beginning stage, and maybe they can start there. But it's still something that I struggle with, "How will I make it a central part of the classroom?" And part of the problem is having to deal with the real traditionally-based report card. That's been a real stumbling block for a lot of teachers in our school.

Outside reporting of assessment information and pressure for judging and accountability have been major sources of frustration for Linda. In the past, classroom standardized test scores were made public and students scores were compared yearly. Even though Linda acknowledged a preference for contextualized assessment data, translating the wealth of information she and her students collected about themselves as readers and writers into a standard report card was difficult and "assigning a letter grade was tough." Linda felt that the report card was not a very good reflection of her children's progress, but many other schools in the district wanted a traditional report card and many of the parents wanted to see traditional grades. Linda hoped that her school could find a more forceful argument for a checklist or narrative format report card.

In an attempt to understand portfolio implementation in her classroom "from the inside," Linda formally began creating her own portfolio. Her student teacher, who had learned about portfolio assessment as part of her university classes, also shared her evolving portfolio. Together, they told stories about memories to help students talk about and reflect upon portfolio items.

> Linda (10/05/93) I tried this year to talk about it in terms of my own portfolio and my student teacher is keeping one and that helped to have her talk about hers a little bit, and talk about it in terms of having these things to help create memories, so to speak, and a lot of them talked about "Yeah, my mom has a box and she puts all my school stuff in that box." And "Oh, yeah, my mom's got a paper I did in kindergarten. I couldn't even write. Oh, it's really funny." So they can sort of relate to it in those terms.

By examining the issues directly, Linda learned about herself and her students. When a student asked "What exactly do you mean by a portfolio? Linda directed it back to the students.

> Linda: Who would like to tell us what you think they are?
>
> Terry: We kept our writing in it, then we cleaned it out and took stuff home.
>
> Linda: How did you decide what to take home and what to keep?"
>
> Terry: I just left the kind of good stuff.

Linda: Who decided what was good stuff?"

Terry: I decided.

On another occasion, Linda asked her students to do some reflective writing: 1) Tell me what you think about your portfolio, and 2) What does a portfolio tell a teacher about what you can do when you read and write? They shared their comments as a group. (Stuart) "I was reading what my mom has wrote about me." (Tommy) "I love it cause when I'm older I can see all of it. I might not remember, and I can remember my friends and what I wrote about." (Quadricka) "There was a lot of writing in it." Linda wrote that Stuart actually read aloud the letter his mom had written. These sharing episodes continued the building of a strong sense of community and caring among the students, but Linda realized that portfolios can not be implemented instantly. "Their use evolves over time and changes as the teacher learns more, observes the children he/she teaches, and allows time for reflection and change."

Overall, Linda wanted authentic assessment to become a more integral part of her classroom, a mainstay of the classroom community containing evidence of the unique voices within that community. She was looking for contextual data rather than isolated information, and customized means to document students' dynamic change. Linda wanted students to look deeply at themselves, to see themselves more clearly and to articulate their learning in ways that were different from the standard. She was developing a working knowledge of her students, the curriculum, the social context surrounding her children, and the evidence that she sought to support her teaching practices.

BEVERLY REFLECTS ON EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Beverly was a member of a group of nine teachers from two different schools within the same county who were interested in implementing portfolio assessment. During the very first meeting in August, Beverly described her classroom as a place where students were given large allotments of time to engage with whole texts, and where there were opportunities to choose and share books read and written by students. Classroom members provided positive response and support for peers' on-going plans and ideas. Beverly talked about evaluation as a way of defining what specific content students had mastered. She was searching for different ways to assess children because some of the ways she had been using hadn't "shown what the children know." Initially, she described a portfolio as "a file or folder into which is placed work samples of each student." She talked about portfolios as tools to describe how she would include students in the process of judging performance and mastery using portfolios. This

approach would serve as an alternate way for students to show her that they had retained information.

> Beverly (8/20/92) I think as a teacher, after you've taught something, you want to know if your children have learned what you have taught. And you think of those objectives that you've taught and you want to see if they've mastered those objectives. And sometimes the tool that I come up with to test those or to measure those is not as creative or as good as what a child can come up with.

As early as the end of September, Beverly was already beginning to talk about learning as progress over time. She used the portfolio to showcase students' strengths and weaknesses. She viewed it as a way to get to know her students better; to see growth from a beginning point in her relationship with them. Every week, Beverly had showcasing time during class meetings where students shared an accomplishment, a story, a drawing, a memorized poem, a joke, and other portfolio items. During the showcasing process, Beverly learned about students' interests, talents, aspects about their personal lives, and how each one learned best. She was convinced that saving these portfolio samples over time, meeting as a class group, and interacting with parents and students during conferences responded to students' needs and helped the students, their parents, their peers, and herself, as teacher, visualize growth and change.

> Beverly (9/30/92) The work samples that I had organized into a folder or if you want to call it a portfolio help so much when I have parent conferences. I could show them the strengths and weaknesses that their child was having. And then, I've started doing anecdotal records once a week with the child in reading. Having them pick something they want to read. And we sit down and I listen to that child read.

In October, Beverly became concerned about students' ownership in creating their portfolios. At first, she was only comfortable with letting the students take responsibility for filing portfolio items. She attempted to shift toward meaningful student involvement by having her students reflect in writing on individual portfolio items. For Beverly, portfolios should contain purposeful work. Students can see that their work is meaningful when they respond to portfolio items.

> Beverly (10/20/92) Part of the children reflecting on what's in their portfolio, you could ask them, "How do you feel about this piece of work?" Have them write about it on that piece of work. Maybe put a sentence down on the board for them to expound on in writing, so they could look at it and then

> reflect on that piece in written form . . . . . I think the main thing is that they're aware that it's their work, and that it's meaningful. We think it's meaningful and I think they think it's meaningful. We do it for a reason. It's like one of my little boys today said, "The light bulb just went on." He understood what we've been talking about. I guess that's what teaching and learning is all about. They know it's for a purpose.

In March, Beverly began making changes in her classroom in response to her changing beliefs about portfolio assessment. She tried whole class brainstorming events on selection of portfolio items. She followed-up these whole group conferences by meeting with small groups of about five students to work with them on selecting portfolio items while the others in the class were observing. Then she worked one-on-one with students who were having the most trouble writing. Her concept of a portfolio broadened from it being a simple receptacle for the purpose of holding and organizing materials to a dynamic process-oriented vehicle for response and self-evaluation. In an interview she said, "At first, it was a place to put writing, just an organizational tool. Now we weed out, they edit, self-evaluate, publish. It's used for a purpose."

Beverly's sense of purpose is seen in her open-ended definition of what a portfolio might be. She let the students' portfolios evolve over time instead of setting expectations and criteria up-front. She also helped her students see that portfolios are ongoing, flexible, and multidimensional. Again, one-to-one conferences were a way for Beverly to support the uniqueness of individual portfolios. Beverly continued to ask questions, nudge self-evaluation, and respond to students' work.

Lisa: Well, this book's called "Amanda Goes to the Beach" and these are some of the drawings.

Beverly: I see a picture of a girl there. Do you like to draw pictures of girls?

Lisa: Yes, anything that's alive. I did this in 1992.

Beverly: And the book that you're working on now is a Chinese fable, I think it is, isn't it? How are you going to illustrate it? Are you going to look at some books that were here when we were studying about China, or are you just going to remember and draw some things from memory?

Lisa: I'm probably going to try to remember about the weaving of a dream and the fairies and stuff. I'm going to try to do a lot of those exciting things in the drawings.

Beverly: Well, I've got that book in the room if you need to use it to help you along. You're welcome to use it.

As a result of focusing on learners needs, the student portfolios in Beverly's classroom looked very different from each other. They included different combinations of writing samples—in process and published pieces, journal pages, examples of talents outside of school (e.g. art, singing, drama, drawings), reading theme tests, labeled diagrams, anecdotal records, reflections of how students feel about a piece of work, cumulative summary sheets (growth statements), comments during conferences, notes from students reading aloud, book logs, videotapes of students looking over their portfolios, and videotapes of portfolio showcases.

Over time, Beverly attempted to make her classroom more responsive to students' actual needs and learning processes. She created a form to collect personal comments that students were making such as: "I'm writing better than I did last time." She wanted students to give her an impression of their progress. Her students also responded in unique ways to the portfolio as a whole.

Chad: I like using my portfolio because I can keep my paper in it, color pictures and other interesting things in my portfolio, and I can write stories too, and reading log, too.

Darnell: I like my portfolio because it keeps important stuff. It keeps logs and a joke book.

Roberto: I like the portfolio because it has my papers.

Brandy: I like my portfolio because it has my special work in it.

Lindsey: I do like doing my portfolio because I see what I do.

Meg: I like my portfolio because I get to put my favorite things in it.

Lisa: I like using my portfolio because I can look back from the beginning of school.

Maya: I like my portfolio because it comes in handy.

Luke: I like using the portfolio because I can look back at my work. I like putting paper that we do so I can't forget about it. We put book logs in our portfolio.

Beverly was surprised by a specialized portfolio that was developed by Lisa, one of her second grade students. Lisa decided on her own to focus on her art expertise and developed a special portfolio. Beverly held an evaluation conference with the student and discovered the possibility of self-evaluation with diverse types of portfolios.

Beverly (4/30/93) I think it's a real good example of self-evaluation and some reflection of her work over the year. . . . Her mother wrote me a letter, which

was really touching, saying how much it meant to her family that we had taken time just to look at her child as one child in my room. And so that led me to think that I really could do this for more than just one child. I could look at children and find their strengths maybe, and have them make a specialty type portfolio for the entire year and maybe they could collect things they really do well. I think it builds their self-esteem.

In the evaluation conference, Beverly responded to Lisa's portfolio piece in a supportive manner. Lisa self-evaluated her work focusing the interaction on emotion and action, two qualities of the work that made her proud. She also reflected on her ongoing learning.

Lisa: This is a panda and it was snowing and this is a snowman [she reads the first page] "Giant pandas are not bears. They are pandas. Some scientist believe they are counsins to the raccoon. Panda means "big bear cat' in China." I like this one [a drawing of a claw and beside it a closed claw] because it has more emotion. He's moving his claws out like this and it closes in on the bamboo.

Beverly: You've shown an action from the first picture to the second picture. I see, that's real interesting. After looking over all these pictures you've done this year, I was wondering, can you tell anything in your work that you've improved on?

Lisa: I think I've improved on people, the people I've drawn and things that are alive. I like to draw things like that. And I think I have improved a lot about that, and other things, like illustrations and things in the books.

In a presentation at a children's literature conference in May, Beverly listed goals for next year, confirming her continued movement toward a broader understanding of purposes for creating a portfolio.

I want to look for students' hidden talents in order to guide them toward a collection no matter what that collection might be. I think it would be a good way to build each child's self-esteem. I want to include within the notebook a self-evaluation for each project completed. The self-evaluation is going to be a teaching tool at the end of each theme to review all of the objectives that we had done on that theme and for the children to make up their own self-evaluation, and to put comments in there about what they did on that project. I want to write an end-of-the-year summary for next year's teacher.

When Beverly recognized that portfolios can have a variety of purposes according to individual interests, she further broadened her concept of portfolio assessment. By recognizing new possibilities, portfolios can become more multidimensional, more purposeful, and more dynamic.

> Beverly (10/07/93) It's whatever the purpose is. That's what's going to guide you as to what you're going to do. I think that's what people were saying. Some people were saying that they used it as their grading tool. It was for assessment purposes, and they had parents sign it and agree with what they said. A lot of people say, "Well, that's not why I use it." Everybody has their own purpose for making a portfolio.

Multiple purposes for evaluation caused Beverly to confront issues of ownership, self-evaluation, following statewide objectives, and documenting growth over time. During the next year, Beverly sought to broaden her definition of what a portfolio might be by integrating self-evaluation into everyday aspects of her classroom. Evaluation became more collaborative, interactive, and learner-centered. The emphasis of her instruction moved from mastery of skills to communication and expression.

EVALUATION AND LEARNING

As Linda and Beverly asked questions about connections between evaluation and learning and sought to define purposes for evaluation in broader terms, we became aware of three distinct purposes which we are calling judging, responding, and accounting. Listening to Beverly and Linda talk about the role of evaluation in their classrooms prompted us to reflect on when and how diverse evaluation purposes might be compatible.

Judging

Both teachers asserted that an important purpose for evaluation was to recognize and reward excellence. The emphasis here was on encouraging children to produce and display their "best work." This purpose centers on judging performance and progress toward predetermined goals, skills, and end products.

> Linda (03/18/93) Every grade period they [the students] get their working portfolio out and choose one piece for evaluation. . . . . With input from teachers at all grade levels, we developed frameworks of "literature behaviors" and skills. We used state objectives as a guide. Progress towards these "literacy benchmarks" would be assessed every nine weeks and recorded on reading and writing checklists.

> Beverly (9/30/92) Once they [the students] start editing their work more on their own, and our writing workshop time gets longer, they'll really be able to do a better job of choosing what they think is the best book [writing published as a book] in a writing folder, or even in their reading folder.

Linda and Beverly also realized that portfolios could assist in documenting and reporting performance to students, parents, and administrators. With the help of their students, Beverly and Linda used predetermined criteria at fixed time frames to track improvement and record demonstrated accomplishments, but both teachers expressed difficulty in trying to reconcile the demands placed upon them for maintaining these judgments.

Responding

Each teacher said at some point that she was concerned about individual growth and that the teacher's role should be to help students develop a sense of ownership and to take some responsibility for their own learning. Both desired to provide responses that helped children identify, clarify, and progress toward self-selected goals.

> Linda (writing, 04/21/93) I wanted students to begin to get involved in self-assessment of their writing. As I conferenced with students, I noted what they had said in response to my two requests: 1) Tell me why you chose this piece; and, 2) What do you think you did well in this piece? I made these notes on "Post-Its" and stuck them on the piece of writing. At the end of the quarter, I was able to share with the students what they had said about each piece of writing.

> Beverly (09/30/92) We sit down and I listen to the child read. Then I make anecdotal records and the goal was to listen to each child once a week and that doesn't sound like very much, but it is. It takes me all week to do that. And I really do enjoy that. That's one of my favorite things I've been doing with the children. I get to know them so much better. I have seen so much growth since the beginning. I'll say that to the child. They really understand about their reading more.

Portfolios helped Beverly, Linda, and their students focus on individual growth. Anecdotal records and "Post-It" notes placed in the students' portfolios became process-oriented information for students and parents. By making suggestions directly to the learners, Linda and Beverly helped their students recognize goals and make decisions about future learning, directions, and activities. The distinction between this purpose and the previous one is a focus upon prospective thinking, the process of looking forward.

Accounting

Further complexity was added when both teachers talked about wanting the children in their classes to become more aware of themselves as learners, to reflect upon how they and others engaged in learning as a process

of change. In Linda and Beverly's classrooms, the students orally self-evaluated and expressed their learning through everyday conversations and stories. Some of their students captured stories about their lives as readers, writers, and learners through written reflections. The two teachers documented other students' stories through anecdotal notes and tape recordings. Here the emphasis is on capturing the stories that children tell about themselves as learners as they reconstruct learning experiences.

> Linda (writing, 04/21/93) Perhaps the most effective way to translate assessment information is to focus on the stories of individual children. One of my goals for the past school year was to use portfolios to document more authentic assessment in reading and writing. As I reflect on successes and failures toward meeting that goal, I realize that I've gained far more information about my students as learners than any standardized test score could provide.

> Beverly (10/20/92) They talk about things they're interested in, and some talents that I may not even know that they have, that they do outside of school, like a musical instrument, or something they do with their family, or personal problems that are really bothering them that would give me some insight as to why they're behaving like they are, or why they're having problems performing in the classroom. Just personal things that they wouldn't come out and tell me in class, but they would write or draw about.

While responding is a forward looking process, accounting seems to be retrospective, reflective, and more self-evaluative. We believe that children and teachers can collaborate to account for the time they spend together in whole language classrooms. The process of taking a narrative approach to evaluation is empowering because this encourages children to take some responsibility for their own (and others') learning while providing teachers with evidence upon which to base decisions about "what's important now" for individuals and groups of children.

Beverly and Linda used language associated with all three of these evaluation purposes without explicitly acknowledging the distinctions between them. As the year progressed, the teachers expressed dissatisfaction that their particular interpretation of portfolio process had failed to address one or another of the purposes highlighted above. In pointing this out, we do not wish to imply that teachers ought to cultivate a single-minded perspective on evaluation. On the contrary, Beverly and Linda's experience supports a multipurposed approach to evaluation in school, one that embraces teachers' as well as students' needs.

Their experience suggests that portfolio use can have a direct influence on teachers' instructional practices and beliefs. From watching, listening, and talking with Beverly and Linda as they struggled with decisions about

how much responsibility young children should assume with portfolios, we learned that the teacher need not be isolated from the process of creating a portfolio. As Rief (1990) points out, students retain ownership by determining the internal criteria — their own choices and reasons for selection, but the teachers can set the external criteria, that is, collaborating with students to decide when and to what extent best work will be revised, reworked, and evaluated, providing responses to students' ideas, and promoting students' self-evaluations of process and product. By gradually taking on a supporting role of listener, responder, and reader, Linda and Beverly learned about their students and their teaching practices through portfolio collections of worthwhile learning experiences.

By the Spring of 1993, Linda and Beverly had developed a clearer understanding of evaluation and learning within the social context of their classrooms. They used this connection to begin formulating new directions for another school year. What began as a search for answers to questions about how best to evaluate children's work in school had evolved for these second grade teachers into a quest to become better teachers by examining their students' and their own learning.

SUMMARY

After a year of experimenting with portfolio assessment, Beverly and Linda broadened their perspectives on possibilities for using portfolios. Overall, they derived a sense of empowerment from reconsidering their role and their students' role in connecting evaluation with learning in the contexts of their individual classrooms. Both teachers began the next year with new questions clustered around the notion that portfolios might serve a variety of different purposes. Portfolio assessment has helped Linda develop new ways of capturing evidence of progress in reading. Not satisfied with the kind of information that is generated by standardized testing, she began the year searching for a way to document student achievement that would be meaningful for all concerned including the students themselves, their parents, and administrators. By using portfolios to help her second grade students tell stories about their experiences as learners, Linda has provided opportunities for them to exhibit growth not captured by testing, growth that in some cases clearly transcends curricular goals.

Although Beverly remains the primary decision-maker when it comes to evaluation in her classroom, she is moving toward increasing student involvement in self-evaluation. Developing an approach to portfolio assessment has enabled her to act on her expressed desire to better understand her students as individuals. Student portfolios have helped Beverly to acknowledge different ways students might meet or exceed her expectations about performance and progress.

Observing and listening to Beverly and Linda question their classroom practices connected with assessment has led us to view portfolios from a much broader perspective than that which previously guided our thinking. We support the following principles as guides for teachers who are implementing portfolio assessment:

1. The process of creating a portfolio begins with questions about purpose, questions about what children are learning and why which lead students and teachers to reflect upon what is happening in their classroom.
2. Portfolios can serve multiple purposes such as tracking progress, supporting response, and creating portraits of students as readers, writers, and thinkers.
3. Young children become self-aware of themselves as learners by collecting, selecting, and reflecting on worthwhile learning experiences.
4. Teachers of young children can be actively involved in fostering ownership and self-evaluation by helping students select best work, by responding in ways that help learners pursue goals, and by supporting the gathering of students' stories.
5. Portfolios can contain dynamic process-oriented information that help teachers learn about their students and their teaching practices.

Beverly and Linda have become more confident and respectful of what they know about learners and learning. Experimenting with portfolio assessment has clearly supported them in taking a more proactive stance toward evaluation than they did in the past. Both now recognize that portfolios may vary according to the purposes being served, and that no single approach is capable of providing all that is required by the demand that teachers generate opportunities for evaluation and self-evaluation. Linda and Beverly are now prepared to take responsibility for their decisions about the kinds of portfolios they will have their students create in the future. They know that when judging is required, portfolios can provide evidence of performance by showcasing a student's best work. When a more responsive stance is called for, they know that portfolios can be a vehicle for empowering students to make decisions about what and how they will learn. They know as well that portfolios can assist students in becoming self-aware about how and why they learn. Portfolios that focus on accounting for one's activities as a learner perhaps offer the most powerful way to connect evaluation and learning. One thing is certain: unlike standardized testing, which remains essentially the same from year to year, the portfolios Beverly and Linda ask their students to create in the future will reflect new insights both teachers will have gathered as a result of their own self-reflection and questioning.

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