

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

Involving Children in the Portfolio Process

(Excerpted with Permission from R. Newman. *Creating Portfolios with Kids in Out-of-School Programs: IDEAs for Communicating with Parents and Enhancing Program Quality*. Cape Charles, VA: Newroads Media, 2005. Pages 61 - 62)

Introduction

School-age children can be actively involved in building and reviewing their *Portfolios*. As children participate in collecting and selecting work samples for their *Portfolios* they become increasingly aware of their talents, capabilities, interests, and accomplishments. This awareness contributes to the development of a positive sense of self, helps children recognize their growing competencies, and encourages children to set personal goals and take the initiative to expand on their abilities and interests. *Portfolios* developed with input from children have an authentic quality because they provide a close look at how children see themselves. This authenticity is valuable when sharing information with parents and other professionals.

1. Conduct a Portfolio Orientation Meeting with Children.

- a. If possible, keep the meeting small – ideally no more than 15 children. If your program is large, consider establishing Portfolio Groups by assigning a small number of children to each staff member. Conduct separate Portfolio Orientation Meetings with each group of children.
- b. Begin the meeting by asking children to brainstorm a list of things they are good at doing. Encourage them to think about their own accomplishments as well as the accomplishments of their friends.
- c. When a number of accomplishments are on the list, tell children the program is starting a new project where each of them will have an opportunity collect artwork, writing, and other things they create in the program. Ask children for more examples of products or projects they could save to show their accomplishments. Guide the conversation to help them recognize that sometimes the best way to demonstrate an accomplishment might be to take a photograph or make a tape recording.
- d. Tell children that you will be collecting all these different types of items and that you would like their help in choosing the samples for each of their *Portfolios*. Let them know that *Portfolios* will be a great way to share their accomplishments with their parents who often aren't aware of what they do at the program.
- e. To help children understand what you mean by *Portfolios*, display a "sample" *Portfolio* that you have created in advance to illustrate some of the things that children might have in their individual *Portfolios*.
- f. Provide each child with an empty *Portfolio* container that your program has chosen. Have each child label his or her own container and place it in the spot selected for storage.
- g. Tell children in your group that you will be meeting briefly with each of them to make a plan for building individual *Portfolios*.

2. Conduct Individual Meetings with Children in Your Portfolio Group. Schedule brief meetings with individual children during free time to talk about building their individual Portfolios.

- a. Use the Developmental Checklist as a guide for helping children focus in on the kinds of things they would like to collect for their *Portfolios*. Avoid using professional jargon, and talk informally with children. Help them reflect on how they are developing physically, how they are increasing in their thinking skills, how they are growing socially. Help them identify skills they are developing, how they are expanding their interests, and how they are using their talents.
- b. Ask children what kinds of items they would like to include in their *Portfolios* and why. Tell children you will also make suggestions about what to include and that you will help them make final selections.
- c. Let children know that you understand that sometimes they may not want to give up work samples or projects for *Portfolios*. Tell them that taking photographs may be an option when they don't want to part with a favorite project or piece of artwork. Also tell them that they may take their own photographs or ask staff to help.
- d. Ask children if they can think of things they do that would be interesting to save on audio or video tapes. Work with children to make a plan for taping a child's participation in various program activities when appropriate.
- e. Talk with children about hobbies and projects they do at home. Tell them they may contribute items from things they do at home if they would like to do so.
- f. Remind children that parents are very interested in what they do in the program and that *Portfolios* will help them share their interests and talents with parents.
- g. Work out a plan for collecting possible items for their *Portfolios* and tell children when you will meet again to review items and select the most appropriate items to include.

3. Conduct Periodic Portfolio Review Meetings with Individual Children.

- a. Meet informally or formally with individual children every few weeks or once month to review collected items and make selections of which items to include in *Portfolios*.
- b. During *Portfolio Review Meetings*, encourage children to set goals and make plans that will help them build on what they are discovering about their talents and skills.
- c. When it's time to share *Portfolios* with parents, talk with children about the parent meeting and the most important things they would like to share with parents. Involve children in the meetings if possible.
- d. At the end of the year or session, involve children in deciding what to do with their *Portfolios* and whether or not any items will be retained in the program or shared with others.