

# PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS

## ***Selecting Representative Items of Children's Work and Play for Portfolios***

(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 37 – 41)

### **Overview**

*Staff can use completed Developmental Checklists, Anecdotal Records, and Running Observations as a guide for selecting additional Portfolio items that illustrate how the child is developing in the program. Typically, Portfolios may include the following types of items that reflect children's work and play: 1) Work Samples, 2) Photographs, 3) Audio and Video Recordings, and 4) Children's Journal Entries. A description of each type of item appears below, along with examples.*

*When collecting items for the Portfolio it is important to work with children to select items that the child agrees are representative of their work and play. It is also important to link the selection of items to trends in the child's development. The types of work samples collected for each child will vary, depending on the child's talents, interests, and abilities.*

### **Item 1: Work Samples**

*Children produce many different products or work samples as they participate in program activities and experiences. Paintings, drawings, collages, sculptures, poems, stories, building and construction projects, and model building are just a few examples. Selected work samples can be saved and collected in Portfolios to illustrate how a child is developing interests, skills, talents, and abilities. The Developmental Checklist can be used as a frame of reference for identifying appropriate work sample items for children in each age group. Listed below are a few examples of work samples and how each work sample could be linked to a child's development.*

### **Examples of Possible Work Sample Items**

- *A series of collages (illustrating a child's creativity and increasing small muscle development)*
- *An original poem (demonstrating the child's original thinking and creativity)*
- *A sample of a child's attempts to learn calligraphy (demonstrating eye hand coordination and development of a new skill/competency)*
  - *An original story (demonstrating the child's new thinking skills, imagination, and creativity)*
  - *A series of water color paintings (demonstrating creativity and increasing understanding of the media and increasing eye-hand coordination).*

- *An article the child wrote for the program newsletter about helping homeless families (demonstrating the child's interest in exploring the world beyond home and family and making a difference in the world)*
- *A self-portrait showing the child as a grown concert pianist (illustrating the child's growing sense of self and reflecting the child's ability to set goals and make plans for the future)*
- *A gimp bracelet designed by the child (illustrating the child's small muscle coordination and creativity)*
- *Samples from a notebook of sketches of fashion designs (reflecting the child's growing sense of self and interest in personal style as well as the child's increasing drawing skills)*
- *A sample weaving (illustrating the child's competency in learning a new small motor skill)*
- *A sample crocheted item completed over several sessions (demonstrating the child's increasing attention span and competency in carrying out a long term project)*
- *A safety poster designed by the child (demonstrating the child's awareness of safety guidelines and capacity for growing responsibility and independence)*
- *A patchwork quilt pillow (demonstrating the child's design ability and development of sewing skills requiring small motor skills)*
- *An original board game designed by the child (illustrating growing thinking skills – planning and goal setting, problem solving, imagination and creativity)*
- *Copy of a web search conducted by the child to learn about sporting events in the community (illustrating interest in exploring the world beyond home and family and resourcefulness and growing independence)*
- *A book review about customs of people from another country (illustrating interest exploring the world beyond home and family)*
- *A sample menu for weekly snacks created by the child (illustrating growing competency and knowledge about healthy foods)*
- *A poem about social problems and the child's feelings about these problems (reflecting the developing of empathy and the ability to look at the world from different perspectives)*
- *Notebook pages tracking sports statistics of interest to the child (illustrating the child's interest in exploring the world beyond home and family and applying math skills to everyday events)*
- *A series of completed crossword puzzles of increasing difficulty (illustrating the child's increasing language and thinking skills)*

## **Item 2: Photographs**

*Photographs of children in action can provide detailed documentation of children's involvement in program activities. There are several reasons why photographs are important items to include in Portfolios:*

- *School-age children engage in many important developmental activities that do not result in a tangible product that could be included in a Portfolio. For example, a child may spend all afternoon building a complex village with friends in the block area. At the end of the day, the blocks must be put away before the village can be shown to*

*the child's parents. A photograph of the child building the village with friends can illustrate how the child socializes and works cooperatively with others. A photograph of the finished village can illustrate how the child used thinking abilities to plan and construct a complex project.*

- *School-age children often form attachments to the products they create. They want to wear scarves they've knitted, take a quilted pillow home to share, wear the gimp bracelets they've created, use the board game they invented. This means they often don't want to surrender their work samples to a Portfolio. With this in mind, photographs of the work samples provide an effective substitute for the actual item.*
- *Finally, many of the products and work samples that school-age children create are simply too large or too cumbersome to include in Portfolios. Again, photographs provide a suitable substitute for the original.*

### **Examples of Effective Photographs for Portfolios**

- *Photos of a child relaxing reading a book or magazine in the quiet area (to illustrate a child's ability to pace his or her activity level)*
- *A series of photos showing a child completing puzzles of increasing complexity (to illustrate a child's growing small muscle coordination, problem solving, and capacity for abstract thinking)*
- *Close-up photos of the results of a child's long term projects - weaving, knitting, carpentry, quilting, board game invention, or other handcraft projects (illustrating a child's new skills, competencies, and growing attention span)*
- *Close-up photos of construction projects - projects using Legos, K'Nex, Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys, and other manipulatives and building materials (illustrating a child's growing small muscle coordination and problem solving abilities)*
- *Photos of a child sewing, using a calligraphy pen, painting, using the computer or typewriter, etc. (illustrating how a child works at learning a new skill or technique and/or how a child is developing talents and interests)*
- *Photos of a child's participation on a field trip (illustrating child's growing interest in the community)*
- *Photos of a child wearing costumes/using props in the dramatic play area (illustrating a child's interest in exploring different roles, developing a sense of self, exploring the world beyond home and family)*
- *Photos of a child playing a game with other children, teaching a skill to another child, reading to another child (illustrating the child's growing social skills and/or developing competencies)*
- *Photos of a child taking responsibilities in the program – helping with clean-up, setting up for snack, etc. (illustrating the child's growing sense of responsibility and cooperation with others)*
- *A series of photos of a child working and playing on his or her own in different program areas (illustrating the child's growing independence and resourcefulness)*

- *Photos of a child learning to use new tools – scissors, woodworking tools, cooking utensils, various craft tools (illustrating the child's growing small muscle coordination and perseverance in mastering new skills)*
- *Photos of a child relaxing and chatting with friends (illustrating the child's growing social skills and ability to form friendships)*
- *A series of photos of a child sorting objects he or she has collected or discovered in the program environment (illustrating a child's growing abilities to categorize and organize things in his or her world)*

### **Item 3: Audio and Video Recordings**

*Audio and Video Tape Recordings can bring children's participation in the program alive for parents. There are many activities and experiences that do not result in products. Some of the most valuable experiences children have in the program involve interacting with others or interacting with materials and equipment, not creating products or projects. Audio and Video Tape Recordings of children in action can provide parents with a realistic, vivid look at how their children work on a variety of developmental tasks through program experiences.*

#### **Examples of Effective Audio and Video Tapes for Portfolios**

- *An audio tape of a child reading an original poem (illustrating the child's creative thinking and pride in accomplishment)*
- *An audio tape of a child playing a musical instrument, singing, performing an original composition (illustrating the child's musical competence and musical creativity)*
- *An audio or video tape of a child participating in a problem solving discussion with other children – a planning meeting, a discussion of important current events (illustrating a child's use of expressive language skills, problem solving abilities, social skills)*
- *An audio tape of a child practicing a foreign language (illustrating language development and exploring the world beyond home and family)*
- *A video of a child working with others to create a large construction project (illustrating a child's use of social skills and planning skills such as planning, problem solving, and creativity)*
- *A video of a child participating in action-oriented activities like jump roping, dancing, skating, kicking a soccer ball, playing tennis, using a balance beam, (illustrating a child's increasing physical coordination and control, strength, and/or stamina)*
- *A video of a child trying to learn new physical skills (illustrating a child's readiness, persistence, attention span, problem solving skills)*
- *A video of a child measuring and pouring at the water table or during a science or cooking project (to illustrate the child's level of small muscle coordination and/or the child's interest in exploration and experimentation)*
- *A series of video clips of a child participating in group activities – team sports, clubs, group games, small group projects and discussions (illustrating a child's use of social skills and problem solving skills)*

- *A video of a child performing in a talent show, skit, or play (illustrating a child's growing talents and abilities and a child's sense of confidence about competencies, skills, and achievements)*
- *A video of a child engaging in informal dramatic play (illustrating a child's use of social skills, a child's capacity for creative thinking, a child's interest in exploring the world outside home and family, and/or a child's exploration of new thoughts and feelings through imaginative play)*
- *A video of a child conducting a science experiment (illustrating a child's use of thinking skills – observing, planning, asking questions, analyzing, problem solving, making choices and decisions, etc.)*
- *An audio tape of a child participating in storytelling activities (illustrating a child's use of imagination and expressive language)*
- *A video of a child leading a club activity or meeting (illustrating a child's social skills as a leader)*

#### **Item 4: Children's Journal Excerpts**

*Many programs encourage children to keep daily or weekly journals. Journals provide children with a vehicle for reflecting on and expressing important thoughts and feelings as they grow and change. Older children (ages eight and above) especially enjoy journaling. Some children may take the initiative to write extensive entries. Others may need "prompts" from staff in the form of open-ended questions or thought provoking statements about things that affect children. Staff may post prompts in a visible place near the library or quiet corner to jump-start children's thinking. Prompt questions can be changed or rotated weekly to give children ongoing "food for thought". Prompt questions can also be stored in an index file and made accessible to children who may want to select from a variety of possible questions. If programs encourage children to keep journals, a secure place should be provided for storage of journals when children are not using them.*

*Excerpts from children's journals can provide important insights about a child's perspective on his or her growth and development. In considering whether to include children's journal excerpts in Portfolios, it is essential to respect children's privacy. While staff can invite children to contribute selected items from their journals to the Portfolio, the final decision about whether to share journal entries with anyone should be left to the child. If a child does want to share journal excerpts, the staff member and the child can talk about how and why each excerpt could be an important item to include in the Portfolio.*

#### **Examples of Journal Entries That Could Enhance Portfolios**

- *A page describing personal goals and dreams (illustrating the child's development of a positive sense of self and increasing thinking skills)*
- *A poem depicting care and concern for others (illustrating use of language to express feelings and exhibit empathy for the needs and circumstances of others)*
- *A poem about friendship (illustrating a child's growing awareness of social interactions with others)*

- *A plan for organizing a club (illustrating a child's thinking skills – ability to plan and organize)*
- *A page describing a child's response to a "prompt question" posed by a staff member. For example - responses to posted questions like: "What's your favorite thing to do in the program?" "What are you really good at?" "What do you wish you could learn how to do?" "What makes you angry?" "What's the best way to handle angry feelings?" "Who do you really admire and why?" "Who is your hero and why?" "What's the best way to be a friend?" "What does it mean to be a leader?" "What would you do if you were the President?" and many more (illustrating a child's growing ability to use language to express important thoughts and feelings and the child's growth toward developing a positive sense of self)*
- *A child's reflection on how it felt to win a game, perform in a talent show, win an award (illustrating a child's growing sense of pride related to growing competencies and accomplishments)*
- *A page that lists or explores the child's own original question or questions (illustrating the child's curiosity and ability to use language to form original inquiries and investigate and explore ideas that are important to him/her)*