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SCHOOL-WIDE ASSESSMENT

**EVIDENCE OF
STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT:
PORTFOLIO SYSTEMS**

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet focuses on processes for gathering, analysing and using evidence of student learning in portfolio systems. Schools are currently developing these systems in order to report the progress their students are making. This can be done qualitatively and quantitatively, at the level of the individual student or of the school.

1.

PORTFOLIO SYSTEMS

What is a portfolio?

A **portfolio** is a collection of evidence of learning, contained in a specific folder or file. There are two main types of portfolio: student-centred, and school/department standards-referenced.

A **student-centred portfolio** is usually personal to each student.

A **school/department standards-referenced portfolio** is developed for a specific curriculum area. It contains unattributed examples of student work, demonstrating consensus on “best fit” level, according to the achievement objectives of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1993).

What is evidence of learning?

Evidence of learning has always been an essential element of schools’ processes of assessment, evaluation, and reporting. This evidence can take many forms, representing a variety of learning experiences.

Primary evidence of student learning is often described as “authentic” evidence, because it is directly produced by the students, although it may be collected by the teacher. It can consist of products such as written work, projects, art and design work, video/audio tapes, or material stored on computer disk. Often it will include material such as draft work, log or journal material, design briefs, photographs, or time lines. This type of material attempts to capture the process of developing the final product.



Secondary evidence is evidence collected by the teacher or student's peers, which involves interpretation of the student's learning. It can consist, for example, of observation notes, interview or conference notes, peer evaluations, or teacher's monitoring data.

The types of evidence gathered reflect the nature and purpose of the assessment activity. For instance, the evidence of learning gathered by a teacher during a science investigation, where the student is actively involved in testing materials for their insulation effectiveness, might consist of:

- anecdotal notes compiled by the teacher from a number of brief observations made throughout the activity
- a group assessment form completed during investigative work
- a formally assessed report presented by the student on completion of the investigation.

In this example, the evidence collected by the teacher is both informal and formal, and includes both primary and secondary evidence. It provides her with information about the student's performance, skills and understandings.

At the same time as the **teacher** is gathering evidence of learning, the **student** may be encouraged to identify and describe his or her own learning. S/he may document the investigative process in a log. Once the investigation report is assessed, the student may comment critically on the learning by using some form of annotation to highlight strengths and needs, and identify future goals.

Analysis and feedback

When sufficient evidence has been gathered, it is analysed in order to make a judgment about the learning it shows. This analysis is a crucial component in:

- giving students relevant and useful feedback about their learning
- providing the teacher with effective feedforward into future learning programmes which will meet the student's needs.

The criteria for making judgments need to be explicit and clearly understood, both by the person doing the assessing and by the person being assessed.

Some of the judgments will be self-referenced, as students measure their performance against their own personal best standard. Others will be standards-referenced, measuring a learner's achievement against established criteria. These judgments are supported by the evidence gathered.

Eventually, the evidence of learning will be shared with parents. This can be done either in a summary, or in examples of student work.

In the wider context of the school, patterns of evidence of student learning and achievement are gathered in order to establish the progress the students are making, in terms of the school's goals and the achievement objectives of the New Zealand Curriculum statements.

The chart shows how both student-centred and standards-referenced portfolios fit within a school-wide assessment system.



DIAGRAM SHOWING HOW PORTFOLIOS FIT WITHIN A SCHOOL-WIDE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

school-wide assessment policy

- school Charter
- the National Education Guidelines
- "shared" rationale, purpose & guidelines



school curriculum development plan

- an element of the school strategic plan
- in step with Ministry implementation timeframe
- based on an analysis of strengths & needs
- managed & monitored by assessment committee
- part of the school self-review process



learning area policy

- development in step with Ministry implementation timeframe
- describes common purpose and guidelines for balanced delivery, assessment, and reporting



achievement statements/ key objectives

- key objectives/goals related to expected outcomes within a specific learning area



assessment statement

- "nuts & bolts" of assessment procedures relevant to a learning area



learning area programme/scheme

- demonstrating balanced delivery of curriculum & coverage of achievement objectives



long & short term programme plans

- focus achievement objectives highlighted
- specific learning outcomes, learning experiences & assessment opportunities planned



monitoring/data-gathering book

- record of core data of classroom assessment (usually idiosyncratic)
- monitors individual student progress against learning outcomes
- presents an overall picture of class performance
- identifies "at a glance" student & programme strengths & weaknesses
- useful data to feedforward into future programme planning



evidence of student learning

- student-centred portfolio to show a range of achievement & progress over time
- level-referenced/standards portfolio to demonstrate school's standards of achievement



individual student profile

- a cumulative record of student's achievement
- recorded as summary information
- informs next teacher of student's "best fit" according to the levels of the NZCF

translated for

student report

- a record of student's achievement as communicated to parents
- a formal dialogue between teacher, student & parents

2.

STUDENT-CENTRED PORTFOLIOS

Student-centred portfolios have learners at their heart. Students are encouraged to select evidence of their own learning, support it with comment, and collate it in one or more portfolios. These portfolios show their progress over time and their diverse learning experiences. The portfolios are usually shared with peers and parents and are a celebration of the student's learning.

Assessment: Policy to Practice states "As they (students) become familiar with techniques of self-assessment and practised in describing their achievements objectively, they will be able to make statements about those achievements which they can substantiate with evidence" (Ministry of Education, 1994:18). Student-centred portfolio systems fit very well with these concepts of how students should be involved in and reflect on their own learning.

There are as many different kinds of student-centred portfolios as there are kinds of schools. The key to successful development of such portfolios is that:

their purpose and their audience are clearly identified and understood by all involved.

Purposes

Some of the key purposes identified by schools for student-centred portfolios include:

- to involve the student in selecting, collating, presenting and evaluating evidence of their learning

- to demonstrate an individual student's learning progress over time
- to gather authentic evidence of a student's learning from a range of learning experiences
- to encourage students to develop their skills of self-management and to take more responsibility for their learning/assessing
- to establish the links between instruction and assessment tasks more clearly
- to communicate to parents their child's progress through the sharing of portfolio work
- to expand on the range of evidence collected — portfolios may include tapes, disks, videos, photographs, as well as written work
- to demonstrate a range of primary and secondary evidence produced throughout a course or unit of work
- to provide examples of work to be developed within a school's or department's standards-referenced portfolio.

Target audiences

The target audiences for student-centred portfolios may include:

- students
- teachers
- parents/caregivers
- the community
- the Board of Trustees
- the Education Review Office
- other schools or employers.

Types of student-centred portfolio

Student-centred portfolios can vary from a structured, fairly formal, largely teacher-led portfolio to a very loose collection of work which may be selected by the student and/or peers, with minimal teacher involvement. Some student-centred portfolios contain mostly student-selected, self-annotated work. Others may supplement this primary evidence with items of secondary evidence, such as teacher, peer and group assessments.

Student-centred portfolios can be divided into three main types:

- A. Showcase portfolio
- B. Structured portfolio
- C. Self-selected (by the student) portfolio

The chart following sets out the characteristic features of each type of portfolio. However, many portfolio systems combine different features from each type.



TYPES OF STUDENT-CENTRED PORTFOLIOS

SHOWCASE PORTFOLIO	STRUCTURED PORTFOLIO	SELF-SELECTED PORTFOLIO
<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ for sharing "best" work with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ for public relations ■ for gathering regular data across a topic/course within a learning area in a variety of ways ■ to involve students in their own learning/assessing ■ for programme planning and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ for celebrating a student's learning ■ for showing progress over time ■ to involve students in their own learning/assessing ■ to foster skills of self and time management in students
<p>Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ for parents, students, community ■ sometimes passed on to next teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ students, teachers, course designers ■ for external audit of course/programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ students, teachers, parents/caregivers
<p>Exemplars chosen by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ mainly the teacher with some student input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ teacher and student ■ exemplar entries stipulated at beginning of course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ student selected but may include peers and teacher
<p>When completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ongoing but actual work and time of collection are often stipulated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ throughout the course ■ deadlines for entry items are stipulated ■ annotation required to support choice of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ongoing; whenever the urge takes them! Usually requires some form of annotation to explain choice
<p>Assessment process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ exemplars usually individually assessed by teacher as work is completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ each work entry assessed for itself or, ■ portfolio assessed in its entirety at completion of course ■ often some system of moderation in place to ensure fairness and consistency of assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ self, teacher and/or peer assessed ■ criteria for assessment is negotiated between teacher and students
<p>Time management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ongoing collection of exemplars but more usual for specific items to be completed at stated times eg writing sample once a term ■ time and process of collection of exemplars controlled by teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ specific exemplars/items to be done according to set timeframe/deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ongoing collection of self-selected items ■ annotation process is one way of ensuring a thoughtful selection of exemplars takes place

TYPES OF STUDENT-CENTRED PORTFOLIOS

SHOWCASE PORTFOLIO	STRUCTURED PORTFOLIO	SELF-SELECTED PORTFOLIO
<p>Appearance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ usually a very presentable portfolio of "best" work from a variety of curriculum areas ■ often contains goal setting and self-assessing material ■ often an emphasis on presentation <p>Storage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ exemplars stored in manila folders or clear files purchased as part of stationery requirements ■ stored in classroom <p>Final use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ usually taken home to share with parents/caregivers previous to report evening ■ a very few items may be retained by the teacher to be included in a slim portfolio of student's work to show personal standards and to pass onto the next teacher. The remainder goes home with the student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ a range of work within a specific topic which illustrates a number of relevant skills and understandings eg Topic: <i>Sound</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – concept map – sound map – investigation into an aspect of sound – poster on a technological aspect of sound reception or production – transcript of interview with a hearing impaired person (group activity) – self and peer evaluation of learning during the topic study ■ course file/portfolio is kept by and is the responsibility of the student ■ student keeps portfolio as a record of course completion ■ some items may be kept as models for other students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ huge range of work celebrating the student's diversity and learning ■ annotation forms describe reasons for selection and what the exemplar shows about student's learning ■ often has a very personal and decorative cover! ■ manila folder, box file, clear file etc. Usually kept in classroom in readily accessible place ■ shared with parents and others on a regular basis ■ a few items of "best" work may be retained throughout the year and be included in a slim portfolio of student's work to show personal standards and to pass on to next teacher. Remainder goes home with the student

A. Showcase portfolio

Showcase portfolios (sometimes called “skite” portfolios) are primarily developed as a PR tool to show the local community what a good job the school is doing.

Many students, and teachers, dread “portfolio week”. This usually happens a few days before parent interviews, and involves much stress and strife, as teachers encourage their students to produce the prescribed pieces of work for their portfolio. Often the teaching programme is suspended while the work is produced to the publication standard required. The necessary links to instruction are forgotten in the rush to get the portfolio completed.

By the time the portfolio is finished, students and teachers alike are heartily sick of the word “portfolio”. Such exercises are false, disruptive, and largely pointless. They give students unhelpful messages about what kind of evidence of learning is “valued”.

However, there are ways in which a showcase portfolio can be developed to benefit everyone — students, teachers, and the community.

Case study 1

One intermediate with a falling roll decided to raise its profile within its community by developing a showcase portfolio, along with some other initiatives, for each of its students. The purpose of compiling the portfolio was shared with the students, and they negotiated what it should look like with their teachers. Each class



debated the contents and presentation of the portfolio and recorded their ideas. These were then taken to a school meeting and developed into an agreed format.

Although the final portfolio contained only “best” work, and presentation was a priority, the students felt involved, because of the efforts the school had made to ensure they had an input, and the fact that the contents were collected on an ongoing basis directly linked to classroom programmes.

The exercise proved very successful. The students could talk knowledgeably about the purpose and contents of their portfolios with their parents. The public perception of the school began to change for the better.

Case study 2

Another school used a showcase portfolio to share the new learning areas and skills of the curriculum framework with their community. This portfolio contained an explanation of each curriculum statement, together with its learning areas and achievement objectives, as well as a representative range of related student work from across the school. It also contained annotated photographs showing the students at work in the classroom, and posters and projects related to each curriculum area.

This portfolio was developed in line with the community meetings being run on the new curriculum statements. It was also available for parents to look at during parent evenings. During

school hours, it lay on the entry foyer table for visitors to see.

One advantage of such a portfolio is that it is easily portable, unlike the photo montages and other displays which are often developed for such purposes.

B. Structured portfolio

A structured portfolio has a greater degree of prescription and teacher input in its composition and implementation than the self-selected portfolio. Sometimes it is called a “working portfolio”, because it is an attempt to show ongoing evidence of a student’s learning throughout a unit of work or course of study.

The content of a structured portfolio is largely dictated by the specific learning programme it emerges from. It usually demonstrates a range of tasks and achievements for a course of work, or of learning outcomes for a topic.

With the gazetting of English in the New Zealand Curriculum, schools have been updating their policy and curriculum delivery plans in this learning area. Some schools have ensured balanced delivery of the three strands of oral, written, and visual language through developing a structured portfolio.

The portfolio contents are agreed on at the beginning of the year’s programme. Each student’s portfolio shows the range of work expected to be covered. The chart on the next page shows what a structured English portfolio could contain.

YEARS 3 & 4 STRUCTURED ENGLISH PORTFOLIO

ORAL LANGUAGE	WRITTEN LANGUAGE	VISUAL LANGUAGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Tape of a re-telling of a story■ Group assessment of a short presentation on topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ One piece of writing from expressive, poetic & transactional text types■ Student self-assessment of written language skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Book poster■ Criterion-referenced teacher assessment of student viewing & discussion of a television advertisement
<p>(See <i>Planning and Assessment in English</i> [Ministry of Education, 1997] pages 167-168 for useful examples of possible portfolio contents as evidence of progress)</p>		

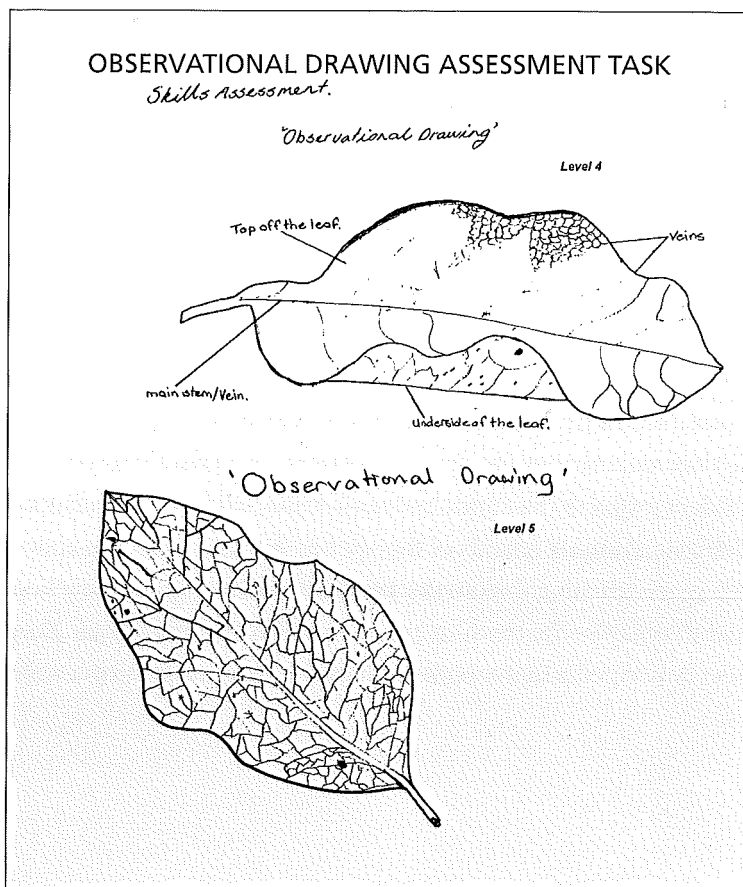
Showing student progress over time

Structured portfolios are more typically found in secondary schools, where their more formal style suits curriculum coverage and students' organisational and presentation skills. The case study below shows how one school used portfolios in science.

Case study 3

In one secondary school a structured portfolio was trialled in the science department for Year 9 classes. Its purpose was to show student progress over time, and to provide evidence of a balanced delivery of the six strands of the science curriculum. At the end of the year's teaching, before the portfolio trial, the science teachers met to organise the teaching programme for the year ahead. They also developed a framework for an individual structured portfolio

for each student in Year 9. They decided that the portfolio should encompass the goals for science for that year. The items to be included in each portfolio were chosen to demonstrate evidence of achievement in relation to these goals (see illustrations below). The curriculum plan gave the students a clear understanding both of the curriculum content, and of the evidence needed of their learning.



YEAR 9 SCIENCE — STRUCTURED PORTFOLIO

Items to be included in the structured portfolio were:

- "My view of the world of science" (drawing/ concept map/ questionnaire)
- Teacher/parent evaluative comments
- Student evaluations of their learning and progress
- Book review based on reading in science (could be science fiction)
- Report of a group project, with attached comments about the student's individual contribution
- Transcript of a talk given on a topic
- Three media news items related to science, with comments
- Log documenting the process followed when conducting a science investigation
- Observational drawing assessment task
- Pre-test/survey on electricity unit
- Poster for Conservation Week (showing draft layout & process)
- Post-test on electricity unit

Science Goals

- Students will have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and understandings of the living, physical, material, and technological components of their environment through their science learning.
- Students will have the opportunity to develop skills for investigating the living, physical, material and technological components of their environment in scientific ways.
- Through their experiences in science, students will have the opportunity to develop the attitudes on which scientific investigation depends.
- Through their work in science, students will have the opportunity to develop understanding of the different ways people influence, and are influenced by, science and technology.

The teachers found that areas which are often difficult to assess, such as attitudes, values and skills, were easier to discern in the student's involvement in portfolio work. Skills such as time management, self-advocacy, goal setting, and perseverance had an opportunity to be demonstrated through the process of developing the portfolio.

Each term students took their portfolios home to share with their parents/caregivers. Parents were invited to write a written comment about their child's portfolio, alongside the teacher's and student's comments (see example below). The teachers agreed that this three-way method of evaluation provided a fairer view of student progress.

TERM 1 PORTFOLIO EVALUATION COMMENTS		
<i>Student</i>	<i>Parent/caregiver</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
<p><i>I am pleased with my portfolio. It's neatly organised & I have kept it up to date.</i></p>	<p><i>I enjoyed looking through Jane's portfolio. It gives me a good idea of her progress in science</i></p>	<p><i>Jane's portfolio is well organised. Her standard of work is very good, however, her summaries could have more in-depth information</i></p>
Signed.....	Signed.....	Signed.....
Date.....	Date.....	Date.....

Profiling a curriculum area

Some schools have used a structured portfolio to raise the profile of a particular curriculum area.

Case study 4

One school was concerned about the very narrow view of technology prevailing in its community. It considered technology to be important, if students were to become skilled future learners. However, many people saw it as “stuff about computers” and as “not a real subject”. The school management team decided that such views were a barrier to delivering this curriculum area effectively within the school, and they should put in place strategies to address them.

Many strategies were discussed, such as information evenings, open focus days, with displays and activities, and newsletters “spreading the word”. Student involvement and enthusiasm were seen as very important factors. It was decided that a structured student portfolio focusing on technology would be a very useful way of capturing learning in this area, and sharing it with parents.

Each teacher discussed the purpose and contents of the portfolio with their class. Students’ ideas were taken into account during a follow-up staff meeting to establish the portfolio format. The teachers felt strongly that the learning process by which end products were obtained should be an important part of the portfolio, and shared ideas about how to include this. They settled

on a range of items, such as draft work, problem solving processes, design briefs, reports, investigations, stories, and annotated photographs of finished projects.

The portfolio also contained many student comments, summaries of conferences, and autobiographical material documenting student attitudes and feelings about the subject. To make the links between technology and other learning areas more explicit, work from other subjects showing these links was included.

The portfolio went home with each student twice during the year. Each time the parents were asked to make a written comment about what the portfolio showed them about their child's learning in technology. The portfolios were also discussed during parent evenings. At the end of the year the teachers sent a questionnaire home to the parents canvassing their views on technology. Overwhelmingly, these views were positive and informed, and there was huge support for future funding in the area, in order to continue development. There were also obvious spin-offs for student and teacher understandings about this learning area.

C. Self-selected portfolio

A student self-selected/free choice portfolio is often a joy to see! It bulges with bright pages of work which the student has proudly selected for inclusion. It contains samples of work from a number of learning areas, and often items from the student's interests outside the school as well. It is made for sharing, and celebrates

the unique characteristics of the student, as well as visibly demonstrating progress. Such portfolios are seldom seen in secondary schools, but many exist in primary schools and early childhood centres.

Very young children can keep this type of portfolio. Many teachers of young children prefer to keep work in scrapbooks, as these can later be incorporated into “big books” to be proudly shared with others. Of course younger students need some help to organise their work, and some schools use teacher aide time to do this. It is a delight to see five year olds choosing and talking about the work displayed in their portfolios. These are powerful, self-evident records of the gigantic leaps in learning young children make.

Teachers of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds use portfolios to capture the “uniqueness” of the learner. The multiple perspectives (from student, teacher, peers, and parents) on the student’s performance provided through the portfolio give a broad, fair picture of achievement. This enhances the quality of the assessment process.

Teachers of students with learning difficulties have found that portfolios are a concrete way of recording the often small learning steps some of their students make, and of showing their progress over time.

The main concern voiced by teachers about these portfolios is their cumbersome nature. The ongoing collection of work can quickly mushroom into an unruly pile of paper. Teachers have

therefore worked out systems for guiding the selection of items to be included in the portfolio, and the timeframe for its development. This selection process is itself a positive learning experience for the student.

Time controls

Some primary teachers have an allotted time each week for choosing and inserting portfolio samples. Often this takes place when teachers are reviewing the week with their students. Each student is asked to look back on their work and select a sample of handwriting, art, or writing which best represents their learning. The student completes an annotation form saying why that piece of work was chosen.

After a longer period of time, the teacher may ask the students to take out, for example, all the handwriting samples they have put in their portfolios and arrange them in chronological order. Together, student and teacher comment on the progress made, and negotiate new goals. There is nothing more powerful for a learner than to see, from the evidence spread before them, how they have progressed.

Annotation

Annotation slows down the selection process. It also ensures that students think about why they have chosen a specific piece of work. This “show and explain” technique is important if students are to

develop skills of self advocacy, and move beyond merely commenting on competency to identifying what constitutes quality learning.

Annotation formats can range from highly formal to very open. They can include both the languages of the classroom and the student's first language. They may include comment from peers and/or teacher. But the primary purpose of annotation is for the student to inform others why the sample was chosen and what it shows about their learning. Often the format includes a section for "my next learning steps", in which the student identifies her/his future learning needs and goals.

As with all effective classroom practices, students need training to ensure that the annotation process is useful. Teachers may:

- develop banks of words students can use
- model various annotation formats through a shared writing process.

The annotation formats should be revised regularly, with input from the students, to make sure they stay relevant and valued.

Some examples of annotation formats are shown on the next page.



(a)

Name _____

Date: _____

I chose this work for my portfolio because _____

Signed: _____

(b)

My Name is: _____

I chose this work Teacher chose _____

This work makes me feel (colour a face)



Teacher signature: _____

Date: _____

(c)

My peer evaluation form

I have looked at and talked about my friend's portfolio and these are the things I like about it:

signed: _____ Date: _____

(d)

Self-assessment/evaluation

Name: _____

Date: _____

This work was chosen by: Me / My teacher

The purpose of this activity was to _____

What I did well: _____

Next time I will try to: _____

Teacher's comment: _____

(e)

Ingoa: _____

Naa wai i whiriwhiri? Naaku

Naa Whaea

He aha ooku whakaaro?

Waitohu: Au _____ Naa Whaea _____

(f)

Reflections

My name is _____ The topic is _____

When I look back at the work I have done I feel _____

I got better at _____

I am pleased with _____

Next time I will _____

My result was _____

Signed _____

Conferencing

Planned conferencing sessions are one of the most important factors in the successful implementation of student-centred portfolios in any classroom situation. Regular, timetabled conferencing is an important way of monitoring the self-selected portfolio. Conferences can give the teacher a much “thicker” picture of a student’s learning processes. They are a chance for the teacher and student to talk about the work displayed in the portfolio and to negotiate new learning goals.

Some students find the portfolio process laborious. Regularly scheduled conferences are very important for such students. They can serve to motivate them as they discuss and justify their choices for inclusion in their portfolios.

Sharing their portfolios with their peers is also a valuable exercise for students, particularly in terms of justifying the choices they have made. However, care is needed to ensure that the students know clearly what criteria are used to judge the portfolio, and what types of questions and comments are useful as feedback. When teachers are establishing the portfolio system and routines, they often negotiate such criteria and feedback mechanisms with their students. This ensures that guidelines are clear and that the portfolios are a valued part of ongoing classroom learning.

As with any quality assessment/learning process, the thought and planning preceding implementation are crucial to success. For a portfolio system to become a valued part of classroom

practice, students need training, ongoing support, and preferably negotiated guidelines.

Assessing essential skills

Student-centred portfolios are a powerful way of assessing some of the essential skills described in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (Ministry of Education, 1993). Skills such as self management, self advocacy, time management, goal setting, self appraisal, the development of sound work habits, and responsibility for one's own learning and work, can all be observed and assessed as students compile their portfolios.

During conferencing sessions, the teacher can question the student and use the evidence displayed in the portfolio to clarify what learning has been achieved and what new goals can be set. These sessions also provide rich opportunities for students to reflect on their performance and to develop their understandings about quality learning. The metacognitive skills that such opportunities develop in students are integral to quality learning and assessment.

We have all this wonderful evidence — what do we do with it now?

One of the most frequently asked questions about student-centred portfolios is “What do we do with all this evidence at the end of the school year?”. Teachers have baulked at the sheer size of some of the portfolios that accompany students from class to

class and from school to school. After one look at the contents page, the new teacher tends to put them aside to be looked at “when I have time”.

However, if the portfolio can be culled in some way, the busy teacher may find it a useful source of information, particularly about the student’s attitudes to learning and personal standards of performance.

Culling efficiently, with a definite purpose in mind, is one useful method of dealing with the plethora of material evidence. Some schools have a policy of retaining a student’s portfolio for two years, then sending the contents home. Other schools conference with the student at the end of each year. Together the student and teacher select four or five pieces of work that best demonstrate the student’s strengths across learning areas. These pieces are annotated and put into a slim portfolio to be passed onto the next teacher and begin the student’s new portfolio. The remaining items go home with the student.

The slim selection of “best work” clearly shows the student’s “best standards”, and can be a useful benchmark for future work. This type of self-referencing is very useful for the teacher looking at the student’s current work and establishing goals for further learning.

Links to instruction and reporting

Whatever happens to the student-centred portfolio, it is important to remember that the student is the ultimate owner and his/her

involvement is crucial. The portfolio is a means of communicating. Like other forms of effective communication, it needs to be shared and talked about frequently, if it is to be sustained and have real meaning.

Leaving portfolios to be completed in a desperate dash at the end of term, then allocating them only a brief two minute “sharing” with parents at report evening, is a waste of time and evidence. To be a meaningful assessment tool, the portfolio must be:

- an integral part of the daily assessment programme
- linked directly to classroom instruction
- shared regularly.

Many primary schools are replacing the written mid-year report with a parent portfolio evening where the teacher, student, and parents use the portfolio to discuss the student’s learning. Some secondary schools are also using student portfolios during parent report meetings in order to show wider evidence of the student’s learning than the usual rows of marks and grades.

Assessment

The assessment or “marking” of student-centred portfolios is a complex issue. It is usually tackled in one of two ways.

Analytic assessment

Each item in the portfolio is assessed individually as it is completed. Assessments may take the form of comments, marks or grades,

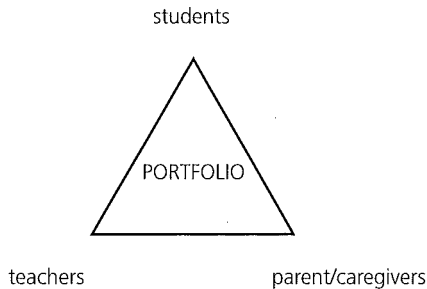
but all are linked to clearly established criteria, made explicit when the portfolio is begun.

Holistic assessment

The portfolio is assessed in its entirety. Again, the criteria by which the portfolio is to be assessed are made explicit from the outset.

The ideal assessment situation is one where the teacher and student assess the portfolio together against the criteria. Student self-assessment is an important element if the judgment is to be fair. Parent comment is also useful. Such negotiated, three-way assessment ensures a more comprehensive and fairer picture of the student's learning.

THREE-WAY EVALUATION MODEL



Below is an example of what one school has decided to do in order to involve the parents more in their child's learning portfolio and assessment. The example is developed for Years 4 to 6 students only.

Dear Parent/Caregiver

This year our school is developing a new way of sharing your child's work with you. We call this a portfolio. Once a term your child will bring home their portfolio to show you some of the work they have been doing in class. We have decided to concentrate on particular areas of the curriculum for Terms One, Two, and Three.

These are:

- Term One — Mathematics
 - * number strand
- English
 - * re-telling a story
 - * writing instructions
- Art
 - * observational drawing developed from the beach study

- Term Two — Mathematics
 - * algebra strand
 - * writing instructions for a maths game
- English
 - * expressive writing eg poems
 - * writing instructions
- Science
 - * a written report on an investigation

- Term Three — Mathematics
 - * number strand
 - * statistics strand
- English
 - * book review
 - * a letter
- Social Studies
 - * timeline
 - * group script for a role play

- Term Four — written report (summary information on your child's progress in all curriculum areas)
- evaluation of the portfolio system.

An important part of the success of the portfolio will be your input. Each time your child brings home their portfolio to share with you, we will ask you to make a written comment on the form provided. Such feedback is important to your child and is useful for her/his teacher as well. Thank you. We value your involvement in your child's learning and we look forward to our continued communications.

3.

DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT-CENTRED PORTFOLIO SYSTEM

Many schools have explored portfolio systems. Some enthuse about them, others see them as just another “flavour of the month” assessment procedure and do not want anything to do with them. Some schools have persisted with portfolios of a kind, but seem to have lost all memory of their original purpose. They have become “just another thing that must be done”.

As with all effective school developments, preliminary discussions, brainstorming, and sharing sessions which all teachers have opportunities to participate in are vital. Implementation problems occur when such projects are imposed on teachers from “above”, and are not appropriately supported and resourced.

Schools are justifiably cautious about adopting outside systems without careful consideration and exploration to ensure that these will meet their needs. Often this process involves teachers in intensive professional development, including visits to look at working systems in other schools, inservice courses, and discussion. Sometimes the “movers and shakers” within the school may lead the development by presenting a “coathanger” of ideas on which the other teachers can “hang their own clothes”.

Case study 5

A science department in a large secondary school used the “coathanger” approach. The teacher responsible for Years 9 and 10 science had attended a course on the development of student

portfolios, and saw them as a useful means of expanding on the evidence of student learning in science. So far this had relied heavily on the results of end of unit tests and examinations.

He and another teacher decided to trial a student-centred portfolio for two terms. During the evaluation process, they canvassed opinion on the role of the portfolio from the students and their parents. This information was then used to help in deciding on future developments for the department as a whole.

Recording rationale and purpose

Once the initial work is done, it is important to record the rationale and purpose for developing the portfolio system. This exercise clarifies ideas and serves as a useful reference once development is under way. The document becomes part of the school's assessment policy.

Conclusion

Student-centred portfolios are powerful and effective assessment tools. They are a meaningful way of recording the "broader picture" of evidence of student learning. When they involve the students in this process, they are an effective means of inculcating student responsibility for their own assessment. Eventually, we will see students computer scanning their chosen pieces of work, keying in their responses and sharing their portfolios with others through E-mail and personal disks. The skills of self management and self advocacy will be magnificently alive and well.



4. STANDARDS-REFERENCED PORTFOLIOS

New Zealand teachers now work with a level-referenced curriculum framework. Each of the seven learning areas described in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* has its own achievement objectives. These are arranged in eight broad levels of expected learning within that learning area. But these levels are not national standards. As the Education Review Office stated in its 1995 evaluation report, *Assessing Student Achievement*, they are “not sufficiently specific for a judgment to be made about their achievement” (Education Review Office, 1995:4).

The broad nature of the curriculum achievement objectives has caused some concern, especially in terms of what to do with them when it comes to the crunch of reporting on students’ achievement, as part of the statutory obligations of the National Education Guidelines (specifically the National Administration Guidelines). However, in many schools, where the expertise of teachers is recognised and supported through professional development programmes, this flexibility of interpretation is fostering delivery of a curriculum which is needs based and reflects the school’s community.

Accountability

Increasingly, educational institutions are being asked to be accountable. They are required to:

- show patterns of progress in terms of their students’ learning
- demonstrate that students enjoy their learning.

They are expected to do this by:

- gathering evidence and data about their learners' progress
- analysing these in order to identify strengths and needs.

The institution then uses this information to:

- plan future teaching/learning programmes
- address barriers to student achievement.

Student-centred portfolios more than adequately demonstrate students' attitudes and involvement in their learning. A school's standards-referenced portfolio system can demonstrate students' achievement in terms of the criteria which the school has established to measure achievement, against the national objectives broadly described in each document in the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*.

Developing school-based standards of achievement

In the absence of national standards, schools must develop their own standards in terms of their students' learning. They recognise that if they are to report fairly and consistently on their students' achievements in terms of the curriculum objectives, they need to establish:

- clear expectations about their students' achievements
- effective ways of demonstrating and measuring these.

This means that in the wider context of the school, patterns of evidence of student learning and achievement need to be shared, discussed and collated, in order to establish the progress the students are making, in terms of the school's goals and the achievement objectives of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*.

Basing assessments of school-wide progress on the results of standardised assessment tasks, such as PATs and School Certificate, is seen as providing only narrow evidence of student learning. Schools are acknowledging the value of teacher-based assessment, supported by qualitative information in the form of primary evidence. Such evidence is kept as exemplars or benchmarks for reference in demonstrating student achievement. This type of assessment is recognised as:

- **valid**, in its immediate links to learning outcomes
- **reliable**, when moderated through teacher collaboration and corroboration.

Using standards-referenced portfolios

A school-wide standards-referenced portfolio system is one way to explore and develop standards of achievement, using primary evidence. When such a system is referenced to the eight levels of achievement objectives for each curriculum area, it can:

- identify standards of achievement
- describe agreed indicators of these standards
- provide evidence that they are being reached.

Within each portfolio, these standards are illustrated by representative samples of students' work. These can be shared with the students, the community, and other schools.

Most standards-referenced portfolios contain:

- a statement of the rationale and purpose of the portfolio

- copies of possible assessment tasks, complete with rubrics
- the agreed indicators described in written form
- exemplars of students' work representing a range of achievement.

The standards-referenced portfolio is usually stored centrally, for example in the school office or department work area, where it can be easily consulted as a reference document.

Teacher collaboration for quality assessment

One of the richest opportunities teachers have to work with colleagues is when they share the evidence they have of their students' learning. However, often the only opportunity for teachers to share such evidence is when they are invited into one another's classrooms and can see the quality of work in displays or classroom activities. It is less usual to find a school where the curriculum management plan allots formal and regular periods of time for teachers to share evidence of their students' achievement. A portfolio system provides an organised way to share such evidence.

Patricia Broadfoot (1992) describes meetings where teachers formally discuss and analyse their students' evidence of learning as "consensual moderation". Wynne Harlen (1994) calls it "social negotiation". Others see it as a form of moderation which involves teachers in making informed decisions about their students' learning, based on agreed benchmarks. Teachers are able to see a range of evidence upon which decisions are made and, using these as reference points, to corroborate their own decisions. Willis (1994) sees this process as teachers being

“accountable professionals”, because it “involves the creation of opportunities for teachers to set their classroom practice in a broader context” (Willis, 1994:172).

Whatever term is used, the process of discussion and analysis is a very valuable one. It ensures consistency of approach and process in terms of assessment and evaluation, while also addressing issues of accountability. Through the collaborative development of assessment tasks, the moderation process, and benchmarks, teachers are sharing and analysing their assessment procedures and the eventual judgments they make about their students’ achievement. Such opportunities for discussion and analysis are healthy and open. They enhance professionalism, as teachers work together.

Evaluation of student achievement: The best time to share a representative range of students’ work is during the evaluation process. Ideally this is carried out part way through a learning unit, and again at the end. (More often, however, it is squeezed in just before the next unit is to be taught.) At this time the teaching cycle is still fresh in the teacher’s mind, and its highs and lows can be more clearly remembered. The evaluation process helps to identify what worked, what did not, and why. This information is then fed forward into future planning.

Expectations for student achievement: Some teachers are taking the next step and using this evaluation time to begin discussing their expectations with regard to student achievement,

in terms of the levels of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework* statements. Through the process of sharing a representative range of their students' work for specific tasks within the unit, the teachers can begin to identify qualitative benchmarks that describe their expectations regarding student achievement, and thus interpret the eight levels in each curriculum area. Such samples of work can then be developed into a standards-referenced portfolio of anonymous and representative examples demonstrating a range of student achievement. These form useful reference materials for making judgments about student performance, both at the level of the individual student, and school-wide.

Curriculum management plans: Many teachers know the value of planning, evaluating and discussing their learning programmes with their colleagues. Usually, such development takes place in teams which share the same year levels. But it is increasingly being done across year and curriculum areas, as teachers come to grips with the New Zealand Curriculum Framework's use of levels referencing, and the integrated nature of many of the skills and understandings of the seven learning areas. Much of this planning has come about as new curriculum statements have been introduced. Teachers from different schools work together on "unpacking" the documents, or schools organise their teachers into curriculum teams to develop a learning area.

Many schools have continued to build on such expertise. These schools have clear curriculum management plans (an element of

their School Strategic Plan) which identify where they are now in terms of assessment, where they want to be, and how they intend getting there. Usually the plan:

- follows the Ministry timeline on curriculum development
- is part of the school self-review process
- supports implementation through resourcing, in the widest sense of the word.

The fact that this plan is developed in collaboration with all teachers means that they have input into it, and that targets and plans are transparent and are managed and monitored effectively.

External reference points

Unlike Britain and many districts within the United States and Canada, New Zealand does not have a unified assessment system enabling individual student achievement to be reported on against agreed standards.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority, which works independently of the Ministry of Education, is currently responsible for registering and approving national qualifications for senior secondary and tertiary institutions. These are part of a national system, the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. James Irving (1997) describes the NQF in greater detail.

Although New Zealand does have a national curriculum, how schools assess and report on student achievement, in terms of the objectives/levels of the curriculum, has so far been left up to

them. The Education Act of 1989 devolved the responsibility for developing such systems to the level of the individual school.

For national exemplars, schools are now able to tap into the Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs) in mathematics and science, currently being developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), for a range of achievement and diagnostic tasks and items. Work is also under way on the development of an English ARB, and other learning areas are likely to follow. It is envisaged that the ARBs "will enable schools to compare the performance of their students with the "typical" performance of students nationally" (Irving, 1997:8). Assessment exemplars from the National Education Monitoring Project can also provide schools with useful national benchmarking information.

Although such resources can be useful reference points for teachers when making judgments about their students' achievement in terms of the achievement objectives of the curriculum framework, it is important that these should be seen as reference points only, and not as the ultimate "levelling" tool. It is the school-based professional development that takes place when teachers are establishing systems such as standards portfolios, and sharing their assessment processes and evidence, that provides the quality assurance for assessment development. Relying solely on assessment items external to the school would deprofessionalise teachers' expertise in the important area of assessment.

Developing common understandings and consistent approaches to assessment

Formative assessment — the assessment processes that are everyday and ongoing within classrooms — forms the basis of teacher assessment. Much of this assessment is unrecorded and remains unformalised. It makes up part of the “gut feeling” teachers have about each student’s progress. Formative assessment is a key part of professional judgment in teaching. However, at certain points in the school year, teachers are required to make some summative “best fit” judgments about each student’s achievement. These judgments are reported to students and their parents, to the next teacher, and to the school’s Board of Trustees.

On these occasions, teachers need to feel professionally supported by school-wide systems which give them opportunities to corroborate and justify the decisions they make about their students’ achievement. Corroboration by colleagues, ensuring that effective and fair processes are in place, is an important feature of professional judgment. A school standards-referenced portfolio system is one way of providing this support.

Current Assessment for Better Learning contracts managed by the Ministry of Education, the teacher training in assessment provided through the development of The National Education Monitoring Project, the Assessment Resource Banks, School Entry Assessment; the training through the implementation of the Qualifications Framework, and ongoing in-service professional development, all contribute to the growing expertise of New Zealand teachers in assessment practice. Through such professional development, teachers have opportunities to hone their assessment skills.

5.**DEVELOPING A STANDARDS-REFERENCED PORTFOLIO SYSTEM**

A. Clarifying the purpose of the portfolio: This involves all staff in a process of updating and clarifying assessment change and requirements. It also requires an honest analysis of current school assessment procedures to identify what is useful, relevant, and effective, and what is not. Teachers need to see how the standards portfolio fits within the “big assessment picture”, and how useful and relevant it will be to their needs.

B. Identifying a focus area: This can emerge from analysing the identified barriers to learning, and revisiting the school’s key goals for curriculum delivery. Some schools also use teacher appraisal to highlight areas for curriculum/assessment development, which can be addressed through developing a standards portfolio.

C. Describing current standards of achievement: The moderation phase begins with collaborative planning and ends with the final product of a school/department standards-referenced portfolio. At the completion of a collaboratively planned unit of work, teachers collect a representative range of students’ assessed work and share this with other teachers. Using appropriate curriculum statements, a variety of reference materials, and their own expertise, teachers begin discussing the evidence of students’ achievement.

This process invariably proves to be an enriching experience, as teachers see the range of evidence of student learning across

the school or department, and discuss and justify the decisions they have made.

D. Assembling the portfolio: Through discussion and negotiation, teachers agree on a number of exemplars demonstrating “best fit” according to the relevant levels of the curriculum area. The features used to describe and characterise each exemplar are recorded as indicators. The material is then annotated and collated in a single portfolio (see charts on following pages).

E. Using the portfolio for moderation: The resulting portfolio, containing agreed benchmark material, can then be used in the moderation of standards in that specific learning area. As the curriculum area is revisited and reviewed, new benchmark material may be added and outdated exemplars removed. This updating is usually the responsibility of the curriculum team leader, the syndicate leader, or the Head of Department.

Case study 7

One intermediate school tested its students every year in each strand of the mathematics curriculum. For two years running, results in the statistics strand were particularly poor. The teachers began an honest evaluation of their statistics programmes. They eventually identified the main barrier to their students’ achievement in statistics as the teachers’ lack of understanding of this strand.

INDICATORS AND EXEMPLARS

Recount and Narrative Indicators:

Retelling Pacific Island Legend,
Tulevai & the Sea

Level 1

Pre-Emergent

- can use some approximations of written language
- verbally retell an event/character

Emergent

- retell 1 event, 1 character
- spelling approximations

Early

- sequence story
- spelling approximations
- uses linking words
- simple beginning and ending
- sentences

Fluency

- has beginning, middle, and end to the story
- evidence of punctuation
- writes complete sentences
- retelling events in sequence
- sets the scene who, what, when, where

Level 2

Emergent

- maintains tense/past tense
- setting and orientation of characters or events
- detail of characters and events
- variety of sentence beginnings

Early

- writes additional information
- uses more complex linking words
- evidence of direct speech
- description of characters

Fluency

- groups sentences giving related information
- correct use of punctuation
- includes only characters of significance
- variety of sentence lengths
- satisfactory conclusion of story

Benchmark Material/Exemplars

*Tulevai was fishing He cort a fish the sea Did
wnt Tulevai to 6 hes slave tulevais mother pasd
the sea to get her son*

Date: 8/96

Context: Narrative/Recount

*Level & stage within level:
Level 1 Emergent*

Support given:

Word list of Interest Words

Learning/skills the exemplar demonstrates:

- *spelling approximations*
- *can retell events and characters*

INDICATORS AND EXEMPLARS

Recount and Narrative Indicators:

Level 3

Emergent

- use of descriptive words to give greater detail
- gives opinions about characters/personal reflection
- evidence of paragraphing

Early

- elaborates on important events
- uses imaginative vocabulary
- groups sentences giving related information into paragraphs

Fluency

- vocabulary extension
- complex sentences

Level 4

Emergent

- elaboration and description of character
- more complex use of language features eg adjectives, similies, adverbs, and phrases

Early

- builds suspense into the story
- writes more complex concluding statements

Fluency

- shows interplay between characters and conflicts and resolves at least some of these conflicts

Benchmark Material/Exemplars

Tulevai and the sea.

Once every day Tulevai went fishing in his canoe. And every afternoon he would come back with nice ? fish, until one day, When Tulevai ? Fishing, the sea told Tulevai to jump out of his canoe. But Tulevai didn't listen. The sea asked the wind. The wind said what will you give me? A whale, said the sea. The wind said very well I will help you. The wind blew and Tulevai sank to the bottom of the sea.

Date: 29 August 1996

Context: Recounting a story

Level & stage within level: 1 fluent

Support given:

Tape/Discussion

Preparation on sequence & tense

Assistance with spelling

Learning/skills the exemplar demonstrates:

Developing structure, spelling, punctuation

Attempting past tense

Retelling events in sequence

Writes complete sentences

Attempting direct speech

For their first foray into a standards portfolio, the school decided to focus on this area of mathematics. Through collaborative planning, ongoing discussion, and sharing their students' work — all integral to successful development of a standards portfolio — the teachers increased their confidence and knowledge of statistics. Reassessment of the statistics strand later in the school year yielded tangible evidence of considerably improved student achievement.

Case study 8

Another school found that the process of sharing and discussing their students' work, with regard to agreed expectations of the levels of the curriculum, actually changed the way teachers were teaching. Before this process took place, many of the Year 7 and 8 teachers taught their classes as a homogeneous whole. But heightened awareness of how students could be working within different levels of achievement throughout a unit of work meant that they needed to group their students according to strengths and needs. The teachers upskilled themselves in this area of classroom management, and group teaching is now a normal routine.

This case study shows how improved teaching leads to improved learning for students. The process of developing a standards-referenced portfolio requires revisiting assessment principles and practices. This can serve to maintain quality assessment systems that are valid and reliable.

Some useful ideas

One key idea teachers have come up with regarding the actual exemplars is that unless these are demonstrating handwriting or presentation skills, they should be typed. This helps teachers to concentrate on the learning the exemplar shows, and not on the handwriting or presentation skills. Unattributed, typed exemplars aid honest discussion.

Another useful idea relates to the broadness of the achievement objectives, and the fact that in the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, levels 1 to 5 each represent approximately two years of learning. So the standards need to be broken down into sub-stages that describe the developmental nature of student learning. Hence some standards portfolios contain statements describing early, developing and fluent understandings and skills within one specific level, as shown below. Hall (1994) calls such groupings “stageposts”.

Level 2		
early/kaakano	developing/puawai	fluent/purapura
Students are beginning to....	Students usually....	Students consistently....

Timeline for development

The timeline for the development of a standards-referenced portfolio is important. If the portfolio process is to be successful, it must be managed and resourced, and a realistic timeframe for its development put in place.

Most schools have developed standards-referenced portfolios in line with the gazetted curriculum statements. Some have developed one portfolio per term, leaving the fourth term for a thorough evaluation of the process. Some have developed portfolios as a means of addressing barriers to learning and of ensuring quality professional development.

Just what does the standards-referenced portfolio do?

The actual end product of a standards-referenced portfolio is not the most important thing. Rather it is the process of professional development teachers undergo to get to that end product.

In some schools, this process may provide the first opportunity that teachers across the school or departments have had to share their planning and assessment procedures, let alone their expectations regarding student achievement.

As Ruth Sutton states, "In my experience, leading and witnessing hundreds of standardisation meetings, few other circumstances are so productive of valuable teacher talk, and there are few things more important for teachers to talk about than the design of interesting and productive tasks for learners" (Sutton, 1995:14).

Many teachers speak of how relieved they are to see that what they do in their classrooms is similar to what their colleagues do, and that they are on "the right track". Others mention how useful it is working with others to plan learning and assessment experiences, especially with newly released curriculum documents.

Opportunities to discuss these, and to “unpack” and interpret the broad achievement objectives, are seen as particularly valuable.

Teachers also state that, in the absence of national standards, developing school standards-referenced portfolios helps to clarify and focus achievement expectations for themselves, their students, and their community.

Beginning teachers and those new to a school find the standards-referenced portfolio makes the school’s expectations of student achievement clearer, giving these tangible form. It also gives them a useful assessment resource to tap into when they wish to assess and check their students’ levels of achievement.

Students appreciate the chance to see exemplars representing expectations related to the assessment tasks they are currently undergoing. Such models, when used appropriately, serve to demystify the assessment process. They can help to involve students in discussions about assessment criteria and expected standards and outcomes. Such opportunities can encourage students to become more involved in, and responsible for, their own assessment, especially when these are linked to their own student-centred portfolios.

School management teams find that standards-referenced portfolios give them useful information for tracking student achievement in targeted areas across the school or year group. Such information can be reported quantitatively, and richly illustrated qualitatively, with the evidence of the exemplars within the portfolios.

Boards of Trustees enjoy the opportunity to see a representative range of student work. Such tangible evidence of learning often makes more sense to them than the graphs and figures they are sometimes presented with.

Some schools have used the standards-referenced portfolio for parents' report evenings. For this occasion, the contents of the portfolios are displayed so that parents can see the school's expectations, and compare, if they wish, their child's work with the standards.

Timeframes, manageability, and other practical matters

The challenges of standards-referenced portfolio development are obvious. A school or department needs to make a commitment in terms of time and of providing the necessary support. The development needs to be part of the school's management and review plan. The fact that teachers become better and quicker at such collaboration (and also enthusiastic about it) makes the ongoing process less onerous.

Increasingly, schools throughout New Zealand will begin sharing their standards-referenced portfolios and the assessment tasks they have developed and moderated to record their students' achievement against the achievement objectives of the curriculum framework. Sharing is already happening among some schools. It is seen as particularly useful among contributing, intermediate, and secondary schools. The ensuing dialogue has served to develop teachers' ideas

about levels of achievement and how diverse their manifestation can be. Such cross pollination of ideas is extremely useful.

Some enterprising schools are currently selling what they have done on developing standards-referenced portfolios. These kinds of resources are certainly useful when used as a frame of reference. But they can be dangerous if schools impose or adopt them without having gone through the planning process, and without the necessary input from teachers. Ultimately, it is up to each school to state what their expectations for their students' learning are, and to provide the evidence of them.

6.

LINKING THE STANDARDS-REFERENCED PORTFOLIO WITH THE STUDENT-CENTRED PORTFOLIO

Although the student-centred portfolio and the standards-referenced portfolio have distinct purposes, there are strong points of contact. For example, a student's individual portfolio may contain the assessment evidence required for a particular assessment task. The school's standards portfolio may also contain such evidence. But it shows a representative sample of outcomes (students' work), demonstrating an achievement range across the levels of the curriculum area.

The individual student profile is a cumulative record that accompanies each student through their years of primary schooling. The profile:

- presents information about a student's "best fit" and progress within the levels of the seven essential learning areas
- comments on the student's development of the eight essential skills described in the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, and on other areas of significance in their school life.

This information is in summary form. It gives an overall picture of a student's achievement in relation to the strands of each learning area, for each school year. The purpose of the profile is to pass useful, summary information on to the next teacher. Some teachers attach copies of the student's latest report to the profile. They may also include a slim collection of the student's work to demonstrate personal standards.

The process of standards-referenced portfolio development, with its opportunities for teachers to establish and describe students' expected levels of achievement, can obviously assist teachers to make fair and consistent decisions about their students' "best fit" regarding the achievement objectives of the curriculums. The ongoing assessment information collected every day by teachers, within their teaching programmes, provides the raw material upon which such decisions are made.

Teachers find that opportunities to check out those decisions, and their expectations of their students' understandings and progress, are reassuring and crucial, if such judgments are to be fair and consistent. It is useful to be able to "see" the evidence upon which such judgments are being made. It is not necessary, or sensible, to moderate all such decisions, but planned and specific opportunities to do this with fellow professionals, every so often, are invaluable, and are the pivot of teachers' professionalism.

Comparing a student's attainment with the range of attainment displayed in the standards portfolio can demonstrate the level in which that student is currently working, within the specific curriculum achievement objectives. Even more usefully, the standards portfolio describes the expected learning in explicit qualitative terms, not just as a series of numbers or grades.

Portfolios and the New Zealand Qualifications Framework

Portfolios are particularly useful for assessment tasks related to performance, where the evidence sought requires the student to produce or demonstrate direct evidence of skills or practical ability. They are also a useful means of demonstrating draft processes, and therefore of proving authenticity. Subject portfolios containing examples of quality work also have a place, as useful reference material for students, parents, and teachers.

The proforma used to develop and present assessment tasks for assessing Unit Standards for the New Zealand Qualifications Framework is a very useful guide for teachers, primary and secondary, to follow when discussing their assessment tasks. The structured framework provides a systematic way of analysing and critiquing assessment tasks in order to ensure that they are of the highest quality.

Conclusion

The process of “consensual moderation” inherent in the development of standards-referenced portfolios not only enhances the quality of teacher performance, but also serves to increase teacher accountability in a meaningful way. This process uses the evidence of student learning to ensure both the quality and the accountability of assessment systems.

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