

Developing a Professional Portfolio for Teachers

PURPOSE OF A TEACHER PORTFOLIO

A professional teacher portfolio is a purposeful collection of documented evidence of your teaching accomplishments. The goal is to present your teaching skills, experiences, and credentials in a meaningful and positive package that proves your ability to perform. A professional portfolio should represent your best work to demonstrate how you will translate your academic experience into a new teaching job. Administrators should be able to get a good idea of who you are as a teacher when viewing your portfolio. The greatest advantage to building a portfolio is that it requires you to think through carefully and reflect on your accomplishments, and by doing this you will be more prepared and confident for your job search and job interviews.

DEVELOPING A TEACHER PORTFOLIO Starting on your professional portfolio early is crucial because developing a portfolio takes a significant amount of time and effort. It is not a one-time event, but rather a process, so it is best to collect items during each college year. You should retain copies of your best work. For instance, keep writing or research examples as well as copies of any honors and awards you receive. You may want to meet with your academic advisor or a career counselor to help you identify what pieces can best illustrate your knowledge, skills, abilities and accomplishments.

TYPES OF EDUCATION PORTFOLIOS There are many formats in which your professional education portfolio could be presented. There are advantages and disadvantages to using each type of portfolio, so ultimately you are responsible for deciding which layout serves you and your presentation style the best.

Hard Copy Portfolio

This type of portfolio is one that is displayed in an actual paper format. All of its contents are held together in a professional binder, and each page or artifact should be inserted into a clear protective sheet. The advantages to using this type of portfolio are that it is very assessable during an interview and it is fairly easy to put together. Hard copy portfolios are visible and with you during an interview to aid in your explanation of your skills to school administrators. In addition, this is what school districts are most accustomed to seeing and viewing. One disadvantage is that this type of portfolio may not look as professional as some of the others.

E-Portfolio Computer Disc

This type of portfolio is displayed on a computer and is obtained by saving

it to a computer disc. The advantage to this format is that it is easy to carry with you, and it can look very professional. The disadvantages are that it can be more work if you are unfamiliar with how to use the technology it requires to make the disc workable. Another disadvantage is that many school districts do not have time to look at it during an interview because they most likely will not have computer access on hand. Finally, many districts may not even glance at the disc afterwards because they fear getting viruses from it or are unfamiliar with this format.

E-folio Minnesota Website

Another portfolio option is to place your portfolio onto a website for school districts to view. [E-folio Minnesota](#) is a free service to anyone who lives in the state. Many school districts are now transitioning into viewing all application documents online, so they actually may prefer to view an online website along with your other materials. However, as with the e-portfolio, there is not time to view the web portfolio in a interview, so you still may want to bring hard copies of artifacts you would like the administrators to see to the actual interview.

TEACHER PORTFOLIO ARTIFACTS

Significant portfolio documents that demonstrate your skills, knowledge and achievements are called artifacts, and many Education majors have a difficult time brainstorming which artifacts to place in their portfolio. Every student's portfolio will be different, so the most important aspect to keep in mind is to keep your portfolio organized and easy for the reader to follow. You must use your own judgment to decide what artifacts best display your teaching and other professional skills, but here are some ideas to get you started.

- Diplomas, certificates, licenses, degrees and transcripts

- Resume and career objectives

- Course assignments (essays, projects and spreadsheets)

- Lesson plans

- Student assignments and evaluations

- Honors and awards

- Photos or video clips of you teaching

- Letters of reference

- Leadership or volunteer awards

- Professional involvements, memberships or conferences

- Performance reviews

Teamwork examples

Research and writing projects

Computer related examples, such as website or flowchart designs

FINAL PORTFOLIO TIPS

The most effective portfolios are those that correlate closely with the requirements of the district or school position. You can modify your portfolio for each particular position you interview for to effectively highlight the skills that district prefers.

Adopt a “less is more” approach in developing your portfolio because you do not want to overwhelm your reader. And remember that your portfolio is always a work in progress, so continue to add to it over the years of your teaching career.