

Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory
A Program of The Education Alliance at Brown University



Assessment Portfolios and
English Language Learners:
Frequently Asked Questions
and a Case Study of the
Brooklyn International High School

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Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory At Brown University (LAB)

The LAB, a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University, is one of ten federally supported educational laboratories in the nation. Our goals are to improve teaching and learning, advance school improvement, build capacity for reform, and develop strategic alliances with key members of the region's education and policy making community.

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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to answer frequently asked questions about assessment portfolios for English language learners and to describe the lessons that portfolio users have learned. Also included is a case study of the use of assessment portfolios at The Brooklyn International High School in Brooklyn, New York.

The advantages and challenges of using assessment portfolios are applicable not only to English language learners, but also to a number of other student populations. Therefore, this publication is helpful for a variety of audiences. It is particularly relevant for school principals and English-as-a-second-language and bilingual program directors who are considering assessment portfolios for use in their schools. In addition, staff developers and teachers may also benefit from reading this document to learn more about assessment portfolios and how they can improve student learning and assessment.

Some readers may not be familiar with the terms used to describe assessment and testing practices. These terms have been highlighted in italics when they first appear in the text, and definitions have been provided in the Glossary at the end of the document. The Glossary also includes the full name of tests referred to as initials in the text. The Appendices provide samples of scoring and assessment portfolio materials currently used in districts and schools.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

In this section, the following questions are addressed:

- What is an assessment portfolio?
- How do assessment portfolios differ from norm-referenced or other criterion-referenced testing programs?
- Why would a school or district use assessment portfolios?
- What are the challenges of using assessment portfolios with English language learners?
- What kinds of professional development activities are necessary for teachers to be able to use portfolios effectively with English language learners?
- How have schools used portfolios with English language learners?
- What steps should a school take to put into practice assessment portfolios that are inclusive of English language learners?

What is an assessment portfolio?

An *assessment portfolio* is the systematic collection and evaluation of student work measured against predetermined scoring criteria, such as scoring guides, *rubrics*, checklists, or *rating scales* (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). Because the contents of *portfolios* are scored using specific criteria, the use of assessment portfolios is considered *criterion-referenced assessment*. Portfolios can provide a continuous picture of student progress, rather than a

snapshot of student achievement that single-occasion tests provide. Depending on school or district requirements, portfolios can include *performance-based assessments*, such as writing samples that illustrate different genres; solutions to math problems that show problem-solving ability; lab reports demonstrating an understanding of a scientific approach; or social studies research reports demonstrating the ability to use multiple sources. In some cases, multiple drafts of student work showing improvements are included.

Portfolios can also contain information about students' educational backgrounds. In addition, portfolios might include scores on commercially-developed, nationally *norm-referenced tests*, such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the California Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). Portfolios may also include results of criterion-referenced measures such as the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP). This information can be collected for each student in folders or boxes, or electronically on a computer diskette or CD-ROM (National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, 1992).

How do assessment portfolios differ from norm-referenced or other criterion-referenced testing programs?

Portfolios provide a broader picture of student achievement than do tests alone, and can include a great deal of information that shows what students know and can do on a variety of measures. Assessment portfolios can include not only the results of commercially-developed, norm-referenced tests or single-occasion, criterion-referenced tests, but also additional measures of student achievement such as writing samples or lab reports.

In contrast, students take norm-referenced, standardized tests, such as the ITBS on a single occasion, and are then compared to other students in their cohort nationwide. The information provided to the state, district, school, or parents is a single score, or a score broken down into thematic subparts. Many educators find that scores from single-occasion, standardized tests such as the ITBS provide them with little information to help them improve student learning. Moreover, English language learners are often not included when these tests are given.

Criterion-referenced tests are developed by stakeholders within a particular educational community to compare student performance with predetermined learning outcomes. In Maryland, for example, the learning outcomes for the MSPAP were established by content-area teacher teams from around Maryland, with goals to be met by the year 2000. The MSPAP tests, given to third, fifth, and eighth grade students each year, are scored by Maryland teachers based on rubrics and other scoring criteria.

Tests such as the MSPAP provide schools with richer information for school improvement teams at each school than do norm-referenced tests, but individual student results are not given to teachers, students, or parents. Like some norm-referenced tests, the results of the MSPAP are aggregated by school and do not predict how well an individual student will perform in the classroom (Maryland School Performance Program, 1990; Maryland State Department of Education, n.d.). Likewise, information about English language learners is not disaggregated.

Why would a school or district use assessment portfolios?

Portfolios are inclusive of all students.

Because many schools are concerned about equity or adherence to government regulations, including *English language learners* in assessment programs is an increasing priority. Assessment portfolios can be compiled for all students, including English language learners. These students are often excluded from norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing programs because of their lack of proficiency in English. Many districts have policies that exclude English language learners from taking these exams for one to three years after their arrival in the school system, or until a certain English proficiency level is reached (Special Issues Analysis Center, 1995). Meanwhile, these same measures act as gatekeepers that can exclude students from educational opportunities such as gifted and talented programs, magnet school participation, and even Title I services. As a result, exclusion from a system-wide testing program deprives English language learners from access to important educational opportunities that are based upon the results.

In contrast, all students, including English language learners, can be included in assessment portfolios, since this involves collecting samples of student work and scoring them according to predetermined criteria. Appendix A includes some examples of such predetermined criteria used for students in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program in the Prince William County, Virginia public school system.

Portfolios demonstrate student learning and achievement more accurately than single test scores do.

Assessment portfolio systems can be designed to assess knowledge gained or skills developed in any content area. As described above, portfolios provide a rich source of information because they can include documentation of a student's educational background; multiple examples of student work; and scores on norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests, along with standardized English proficiency tests like the *Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey*. Moreover, entries in a portfolio are more likely to be representative of the effects of instruction than are commercially-developed, norm-referenced test scores. Portfolios, therefore, can be used by educators to determine how well an educational program works.

In addition, an assessment portfolio system is one of the few assessment approaches that accommodate a wide range of learner abilities (Ancess & Darling-Hammond, 1994). The fact that portfolios can demonstrate growth is particularly important for English language learners. Because portfolios are designed to be inclusive and contain authentic descriptions of what students can do, even English language learners at the beginning levels of English proficiency can participate. For example, these students can write a story or perform a math or science activity and then be judged according to scoring criteria.

Single-occasion, norm-referenced, and criterion-referenced tests may be linguistically and culturally biased, and they do not distinguish between levels of knowledge and proficiency in English (Law & Eckes, 1995). For example, one writing prompt used in a state performance assessment asks students to write a business letter to the school principal making suggestions about a recreation center that is being built, including what students would do there, what equipment might be needed, and who might work in the center. Students are also asked to write about what benefit the student and others might gain from the center. A newly arrived immigrant student may not know what a recreation center is, and therefore could not do well on this *assessment* even though the student may be able to write a coherent argument about another topic (Bellino, J., personal communication, February 2, 1997).

Portfolios can result in improved student learning.

Perhaps the most compelling reason for schools to implement assessment portfolios is that they can improve student learning. By using assessment portfolios, teachers can include students in the process of setting educational goals and developing scoring criteria in the form of rubrics, checklists, and rating scales. Students can become involved in assessing their own and others' work based on the scoring criteria, thus focusing on the academic goals they are trying to achieve.

A growing body of literature indicates that *self-assessment* and self-regulation of learning are powerful forces that help students improve their learning (Rudd & Gunstone, 1993; Smolen, Newman, Wathen, & Lee, 1995; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Because the research demonstrates the efficacy of self-assessment, advocates of assessment portfolios and school reform enthusiastically support portfolios

(O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996; see also the Brooklyn International High School case study below).

Data from *large-scale assessment portfolio* programs also indicate that the use of portfolios can result in improved student learning. For example, an evaluation of Kentucky's portfolio assessment program conducted by researchers at Western Michigan University found that students in Kentucky were writing more and doing more group work as a result of the new portfolio program. Teachers and other stakeholders reported "almost unanimously" that student writing had improved in Kentucky (Baker, 1996).

Portfolios can promote improved teaching.

When teachers decide to put into practice an assessment portfolio system in their school or classroom, this decision involves in-depth, often time-consuming discussions about what assessment information they need and how they can obtain it. These discussions lead teachers to the development of scoring criteria such as rubrics, checklists, and rating scales. Teachers clarify their goals for their classes as the scoring criteria emerge. Once goals and expectations are defined, teachers often try to align their scoring criteria to their goals for their students. This process naturally leads teachers to evaluate their teaching methods and helps them move toward a more learner-centered teaching model. In such classrooms, students have greater control over their own learning, and teachers act more as facilitators than as dispensers of knowledge. Thus, portfolios not only ensure that teachers will encourage students to use self-assessment to focus student attention on goals and expectations, but encourage teachers to evaluate their own instructional practices as well.

For example, in schools in Vermont that have elected to participate in the statewide writing portfolio assessment (92% of all public schools), all teachers at the fifth and eighth grade levels have been involved in professional development on the use of writing portfolios. Many teachers have been trained intensively so that the *inter-rater reliability* (the reliability of scoring among evaluators) is improved. Geof Hewitt, a writing assessment consultant for the state, noted that the program not only provides state officials with a richer understanding of how well students write, but has the added effect of improving teaching and learning because of the information that teachers and students gain by reviewing the portfolios (Hewitt, G., personal communication, October 11, 1996). After studying Vermont's portfolio assessment program, researchers from the Rand Corporation concluded that the effects of portfolio assessment on instruction were "substantial and positive" (Koretz, Stecher, & Diebert, 1992). In fact, Vermont's state-wide assessment system was the only state system that was considered a "model" (rated a Level 5) by FairTest evaluators, because it is based on state standards, relies very little on multiple choice items, and includes portfolios (Lawton, 1997).

The use of portfolios with English language learners increases the ability of schools to be more accountable for all students.

At the state and district levels, assessment information is often collected to ensure that schools are addressing the needs of all their learners, including English language learners. When schools have the array of information that portfolios can provide, and individual students or groups of students perform poorly, the causes can be studied and solutions sought. Without this kind of information, schools are not held accountable for all their learners.

Traditional testing practices have sidestepped accountability issues with English language learners because of various types of exclusion policies and the cultural bias of tests. In contrast, assessment portfolio systems can be designed to include a range of measures that allow English language learners with varying levels of language proficiency to demonstrate what they know and can do, and can include examples of learning tasks that connect not only to classroom content, but also to students' cultural backgrounds (see Appendix A for a sample portfolio cover sheet, a sample of a scoring rubric, and a sample writing *prompt* on pages 36-38). Finally, the increased interaction between students and teachers contributes to a more accurate understanding of students' knowledge and skills.

Portfolios can help schools create a shared vision for student learning, aligned to standards.

The process of developing a portfolio system that includes English language learners helps teachers, administrators, parents, students, and other stakeholders create a common vision of what students should know and be able to do as a result of their coursework. When ESL and bilingual program teachers contribute to developing this vision, the assessment process will take into account important issues in second language acquisition. For example, when assessing content knowledge, teachers can look beyond language errors alone and focus on how well students demonstrate an understanding of concepts. By clearly articulating learning goals and the criteria upon which to assess students' attainment of the goals, school systems help create a shared vision of the purpose and intended outcomes of education.

Once goals have been clarified, school systems can identify, select, and create assessments and scoring criteria that measure the attainment of those goals. *Benchmarks*, or samples of student work that represent a specific level of performance, can be identified to allow educators to have a common understanding of the quality of student work required for the specific performance levels. Goals for student learning can also be directly linked to state content and *performance standards* (see also Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1997).

As a result of the standards-based reform movement, a number of states and school districts have revised their curricula, but few districts have implemented content standards appropriately for English language learners or measured attainment of the standards with valid and reliable assessments. To do so, both language and content standards should be represented in both ESL and content area curricula. The school district in San Diego, California is one of the first in the United States to assess all students using an assessment portfolio system that includes English language learners and is based on a shared vision of standards-based education (Burns, G., personal communication, May 12, 1997). Piloted in the 1996-97 school year, this system measures the progress of students in a program that aligns the district's English language development (ELD) program and the English language arts (ELA) standards. The new assessment system was implemented in the 1997-98 school year and now assesses all students district-wide in grades K-12, including those who speak a first language other than English.

What are the challenges of using assessment portfolios with English language learners?

Assessment portfolio systems have lower reliability and comparability than norm-referenced tests.

Assessment portfolios are not without challenges as school- or district-wide assessment tools. First, state education agencies (SEAs) report that there is general public resistance to performance-based testing, because it is perceived to diminish the accountability of schools and districts (Special Issues Analysis Center, 1995). The public has become accustomed to single scores, like those used to describe the results of standardized, norm-referenced tests, such as the CTBS. Single scores are comparable across schools and districts, and from one year to the next. However, many performance-based tests, including some portfolio systems, do not easily or meaningfully translate into a single score or set of scores that can be readily compared. Because some schools and districts report the results of performance-based tests descriptively, using words rather than a numerical score, stakeholders sometimes feel that the school system is less accountable for individual students.

Furthermore, it is difficult to implement assessment portfolio systems to meet the reliability requirements that many school systems want. Achieving a certain degree of reliability among raters or test evaluators (for example, .7 agreement or better) is important, according to researchers at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (Novak,

Herman, & Gearhart, 1996). If high inter-rater reliability figures are not reached, the usefulness of the scores as an accountability tool diminishes, because the results cannot be used to compare scores reliably between schools and districts, or over time.

However, assessment portfolio systems can also be designed with the single-score requirement in mind. For example, inter-rater agreement on Vermont's writing portfolios improved when scores on five writing subsections were averaged into a single score (Koretz, McCaffrey, Klein, Bell, & Stecher, 1993). When assessment portfolio results are translated into numerical scores, the benefit of richer information about student learning is lost. If possible, providing both kinds of scores will help stakeholders use the information for a variety of purposes.

Standardized testing conditions are more difficult to ensure with portfolios than with norm-referenced tests.

Some states and school districts are prevented from putting into place performance-based assessment programs that include portfolios by state legislatures mandating the use of norm-referenced tests. One reason state legislatures mandate norm-referenced tests is so that all students will perform under similar testing conditions (Special Issues Analysis Center, 1995). When using assessment portfolios, the conditions under which student work samples are produced may vary. There may be differences, for example, in the amount of support teachers provide to students, the amount of time students are allowed to spend on developing portfolio samples, and the extent to which student work is augmented by support from external sources, such as teachers, peers, parents, and tutors. These factors have raised questions about the *validity* of judgments on

student competence based on portfolio work (Gearhart, Herman, Baker, & Whittaker, 1993). In contrast, when norm-referenced tests with multiple-choice formats are used, variance due to testing conditions and teacher bias can be minimized.

Contrary to perceptions, however, standardized testing conditions can be implemented for specific contributions to a portfolio, such as a writing sample. In Vermont, for example, the statewide writing prompt is administered to all students in grades four and eight at the same time across the state, and educators receive training to learn which testing accommodations are permissible and which are not.

Implementing a portfolio assessment system inclusive of English language learners can be costly.

One major hurdle in developing an assessment portfolio system is the cost of developing and implementing it. According to a Rand Corporation report on the cost of science performance assessments in large-scale testing programs, the cost of using performance tests is three to ten times higher than using multiple-choice tests (Stecher & Klein, 1997). However, science may be the most expensive content area for which to develop performance tasks because of the use of manipulatives¹.

Designing, implementing, and scoring any assessment measure is labor intensive, and assessment portfolio samples are no exception. Practitioners invest a substantial amount of time to align the assessment tasks with the curriculum and develop the scoring criteria and tools (rubrics, checklists, and rating scales). When English language learners are included, teachers need to understand the implications of second language acquisition and incorporate

this understanding into their evaluation of English language learners' portfolios. Good rubrics help teachers do this, but additional professional development costs are incurred in the process.

Costs accrue throughout the development phase and into the implementation phase for both assessment portfolios and standardized tests. The only cost incurred that is not also incurred by standardized tests is that of scoring the portfolio samples. State legislatures and school boards often inaccurately believe that standardized tests are less costly to design and administer. When a school system purchases a contract with a standardized testing company, and a one-time cost is incurred, this may be true. However, many states and districts now purchase tailor-made tests, the design and implementation of which are quite costly (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996). Still, getting state legislatures and school boards to agree to the additional costs involved in scoring an assessment portfolio system that includes English language learners can be difficult.

One way to address the issue of cost, as demonstrated in Fairfax County, Virginia, is to view assessment and staff development as integrally linked and to integrate the cost of portfolio development into the professional development budget. When teachers begin to develop a portfolio program, the only real expense they incur is the cost of their time. If the portfolio program is started slowly and built steadily, portfolios can actually be less expensive than buying standardized tests. Fortunately, schools get multiple benefits when teachers develop and score portfolios, because much of the time spent in conversation and assessment helps the

¹Manipulatives are objects that students use to explore, apply, and connect different concepts and skills.

teachers develop a shared vision, which promotes better teaching and improved student learning.

Scoring portfolios is more difficult than scoring norm-referenced multiple choice tests.

Portfolios pose a scoring dilemma for two reasons. First, developing and using scoring criteria require labor-intensive staff discussion and training. Educators must keep second language acquisition principles in mind as the scoring criteria are developed, to ensure that the criteria are valid and reliable for all students, including English language learners. When appropriate, content rather than language form should be the focus of assessment portfolio systems that include English language learners.

If the school uses assessment portfolios in addition to traditional testing, finding the time to score the portfolios can be particularly burdensome for teachers. Fortunately, some teachers and schools have devised innovative ways to solve this problem. One ESL teacher, Anne Bingley, has an effective method for handling the time constraints of portfolio assessment and at the same time providing her students with more individualized attention than she herself could give. She invites English-speaking community members into her classroom to interview individual students and to review and rate their portfolios on simple criteria regarding the written content, the oral presentation, and the visual presentation (Bingley, 1995).

The second reason that portfolios can be difficult to score, mentioned earlier, is that developing inter-rater reliability among raters, usually teachers, requires intensive staff development and is time consuming. In Fairfax County,

Virginia, a district-wide assessment portfolio system is used to assess and monitor the progress of all English language learners within the ESL program. Teachers in Fairfax County have received ongoing staff development on the use and scoring of the portfolio samples. In most cases, teams of scorers, who have received training, score writing samples based upon predetermined criteria. A subset of the portfolios is usually reviewed by more than one scorer until the desired inter-rater reliability level is reached.

Although the process is more time-consuming than the process of scoring a single-occasion, norm-referenced test would be, the staff development efforts needed to train teachers to use portfolios and to develop inter-rater reliability have an unexpected benefit. They result in having teachers who share a common vision of what student achievement in the particular subject looks like. Teachers decide together what benchmarks to use for assessing student work. School staff throughout the system are in close agreement regarding the outcomes being sought and the criteria being used to measure student performance, enabling stakeholders to share a common goal. Most norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests cannot achieve this result.

What kinds of professional development activities are necessary for teachers to use portfolios effectively with English language learners?

Professional development is an integral part of any assessment reform effort and should be an ongoing activity throughout the duration of a

portfolio project. Teachers should first be made aware of the benefits of assessment portfolios so that they become convinced that it is an attractive alternative to their current testing system, especially because portfolios require more work initially than standardized tests. Highlighting the advantages and challenges of assessment portfolio systems (discussed above) would be an excellent introduction.

Professional development activities should show teachers how to embed portfolio assessment into their instructional programs, so they can plan for assessment opportunities as they plan their instruction. As a result of such planning, the use of assessment portfolios will be more manageable. Professional development plans should also include a description of the teaching strategies that lead students to take responsibility for and reflect on their own learning. Effective teaching strategies that encourage this include heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, student-centered instruction, the integration of language and content instruction, overt teaching of learning strategies, and peer coaching and collaboration among teachers. In addition, all teachers working with students learning English should understand the process of second language acquisition and its impact on learning. If possible, individual portfolio users should initiate a school-wide project to develop assessment portfolios with the aim of creating a shared vision of the goals for student achievement. In this way, students and teachers alike will understand what is expected of them.

Another important feature of a professional development plan for the effective use of assessment portfolios is to provide opportunities for members

of an educational community to discuss student work together. This enables teachers to improve assessment practices, learn how to work better with individual students, and improve the curriculum. The process itself also helps to establish a culture of shared learning within the school community (Neill, 1996).

Additionally, teachers should be instructed in developing scoring criteria that accurately reflect their course content and trained to use those criteria to score student work equitably. Finally, the professional development plan should provide teachers with enough scoring opportunities to enable them to score portfolio samples reliably and to choose samples of student work that are representative of a specific level of performance. This process, known as benchmarking, also gives the educators who score the portfolios a common understanding of what the scoring criteria look like in terms of student work.

Improved teaching results from the staff development that prepares teachers to use and score portfolios equitably. The hidden benefit of such teacher training is that it also prepares teachers to work with an increasingly diverse student population. More importantly, it leads to improved student achievement.

How have schools used portfolios with English language learners?

Many districts across the United States have implemented school- and district-wide assessment portfolio systems for their English language learners, including Calexico, California; San Diego, California; Arling-

ton County, Virginia; Fairfax County, Virginia; and Prince William County, Virginia. (Appendix A includes directions for administering a writing assessment, scoring guides, and portfolio cover sheets from the English for Speakers of Other Languages Program in Prince William County’s public school system). Individual schools within districts have also implemented impressive assessment portfolio programs, including Benjamin Franklin Middle School in San Francisco, California; The International High School at LaGuardia Community College in New York, New York; and Rolling Valley Elementary School in Annandale, Virginia. Each school is unique, and the portfolio program in place has specific characteristics that are impressive.

One school, The Brooklyn International High School, has utilized portfolios as a means of improving instruction, increasing academic achievement among English language learners, and providing assessment information to the district and state. The Brooklyn International High School is one of three international high schools in New York City, all of which use innovative strategies for educating English language learners. The work of this school in developing and implementing an assessment portfolio program, and the lessons that school and district staff have learned, can guide other schools through this process.

What steps should a school take to implement assessment portfolios inclusive of English language learners?

Based on the experiences of staff at schools such as The Brooklyn International High School (discussed below) that have developed and implemented assessment portfolio systems inclusive of English language learners, the

following steps are recommended for anyone considering developing and implementing such a program.

Steps to Developing and Implementing an Assessment Portfolio System Inclusive of English language learners

Decide about goals and content: Stakeholders within the school and district, including those responsible for English language learners, decide what assessment information is needed and how that information can be provided. A group of teachers agree to lead the development of the portfolio program.

Design the assessment portfolio program: The lead group of teachers, including ESL and bilingual education teachers, administrators, and parents decide on the range of products to be included in the assessment portfolio program.

Develop scoring criteria and standards of performance: The group decides upon common goals for student learning and performance and how students will be assessed, develops scoring rubrics and checklists, and agrees upon standards of performance to be attained. If possible, benchmarks that exemplify levels of student achievement should be articulated, including benchmarks for English language learners.

Align tasks to standards and curriculum: The group aligns the assessment tasks to the district or state content standards and curriculum frameworks.

Implement at pilot sites, provide staff development, and analyze results: Decide on pilot schools or classrooms and provide staff devel-

opment on the implementation of portfolios at these sites. Following the implementation at the pilot sites for at least one full school year, score the portfolios from those sites. The effectiveness of the program should be assessed and the scoring criteria modified, based on the feedback of pilot site educators and the results of the scored portfolios. Study the effects of the assessment portfolio program on English language learners in particular, to determine whether improved information about these students is available as a result of portfolio implementation.

Implement at all sites: Once the assessment portfolio program has been piloted and found to be effective, implement the program at all sites.

Train teachers to score: School or district staff oversee the training of a team of teachers who practice scoring student work using the portfolio program's scoring criteria and benchmarks. Training should include discussion of second-language proficiency and its impact on student achievement. Efforts are made to reach an inter-rater reliability level of .7 – .8.

Establish guidelines for administration: Stakeholders develop guidelines for collection of student work and decide the time, place, and manner in which standardized prompts will be given to assess students throughout the system. Accommodations for English language learners are delineated.

Score the portfolios: Teachers score the portfolios based upon predetermined criteria. This typically is done over several days in a central location by teachers who have been trained.

Report the results: All stakeholders receive information about the results of the assessment portfolio in a timely fashion, in ways that make the results meaningful to all, including teachers, students, parents, and other community members.

Evaluate the program: After one year, evaluate the effectiveness of the portfolio program and make necessary judgments.

Case Study of The Brooklyn International High School

A case study of the experiences of educators at The Brooklyn International High School shows the process which they have used to develop and implement assessment portfolios, their successes in using them, and the challenges that they have faced. This school can be a model for other schools or districts interested in implementing an assessment portfolio system that includes English language learners.

About The Brooklyn International High School

The Brooklyn International High School is a small, public high school located in a former World War II torpedo factory near the Manhattan Bridge in Brooklyn, NY. As an alternative high school that serves recent immigrants, its mission is to assist new learners of English in developing their linguistic, intellectual, cultural, and collaborative abilities so that they may become active participants in today's interdependent world. With this aim in mind, school staff employ a variety of innovative instructional strategies that include: heterogeneous, cross-aged grouping; collaborative activities; team teaching; content-based language instruction; *whole language*; process writing; experiential education; interdisciplinary study; unique personnel procedures for selection, support, and evaluation of staff; authentic assessment of

students; common graduation requirements based on portfolio assessment; and extensive professional development opportunities. The educators at BIHS strive to provide depth of knowledge in thematic, interdisciplinary courses.

Students at the Brooklyn International High School take interdisciplinary courses focusing on one theme (for example, Growth, Interactions, Law and Theory, and Equality/Inequality) for an entire year. Unlike students at most other New York schools, they are not required to take the Regent's Exam or the Regent's Competency Tests in order to graduate. Rather, they must each complete a graduation portfolio. The school is a member of the International Schools Partnership and of the Center for Collaborative Education, the New York affiliate of the Coalition for Essential Schools.

Since opening its doors in September, 1994, to a class of about 60 ninth-graders, the school has added an additional ninth grade class of approximately 75 students each successive year. The first class will graduate in the spring of 1998. Students are selected if they meet the following criteria: have resided in the United States fewer than four years; score at or below the 21st percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB); have an excellent school attendance record; and, if applicable, earned good grades in their bilingual classes (Profiles: The Internship Program at The Brooklyn International High School, 1997).

Portfolios at the Brooklyn International High School

One of The Brooklyn International High School's unique characteristics is its portfolio assessment program that culminates in a graduation portfolio. The graduation portfolio will be used in place of New York state's required graduation test, the Regent's Exam. Before the high school opened its doors, the principal, Sara Newman, along with approximately 20 alternative high schools in New York City, applied for and received a waiver from New York State's graduation requirements. Students here are instead required to complete a graduation portfolio that is developed by the high school staff.

Each semester that students attend the Brooklyn International High School, they complete an assessment portfolio, which is a compilation of the work they have completed during the semester while studying a particular theme and which provides the basis for semester grades in their interdisciplinary, thematic courses. The portfolios are also used as a tool for self-reflection and as an opportunity to use English with a real audience. Finally, students use the portfolios to help them set academic and personal goals and to reflect on whether they have achieved their goals. If a goal has not been met, the student has the opportunity to reflect on what could be done differently in order to achieve the goal in the next semester. For this reason, educators at the high school believe portfolios improve student learning.

The assessment portfolios consist of several components, highlighting what the student has learned during the semester, the quality of his or her work, the student's level of effort and attitude, and the growth and progress the student has made. During the school year, students are responsible for maintaining their portfolios and including samples that fulfill the criteria. The portfolio contents include activity guides, group projects, individual projects, work from presentations, photographs, videos, work the student is proud of, and work the student wants to improve.

At the end of the semester, students take the contents of the portfolio and prepare for a presentation to a small group of teachers, other students, and possibly an outside observer. During the presentation, students describe the contents of their portfolios. A sample of the requirements for the Action/Reaction portfolio for Fall 1996 can be found in Appendix B. Required contents differ according to the thematic unit, but at a minimum, each portfolio must include several items: a letter the student has written describing his or her personal and academic growth during the semester (see "I. Letter: Personal and Academic Growth" on p. 46 of Appendix B), a description of his or her best work for each teacher during the semester (see "II. Best Work" forms, pp. 47–55 of Appendix B), an evaluation of a project that the student realizes needs improvement (see "III. Work I would like to do over" on pp. 56–57 of Appendix B), an essay that summarizes the student's understanding of the theme (see "IV. Essay" on p. 58 of Appendix B), and a statement delineating three goals for the next semester (see "V. Goals" on pp. 59–60 of Appendix B).

The students are given a portfolio checklist to be completed prior to their presentation, a copy of the scoring criteria for the presentation, and a daily

class log that will help them accomplish the task of pulling their portfolio together for their presentation (see pp. 61–63 in the appendix). Once completed, the portfolios are housed in teachers' classrooms. See Appendix B for examples of student self-assessment of their work (pp. 66–73). The assignment for the first student sample, on pp. 66–68, was to reflect on the connection of all her classes to the theme of Growth. The assignment for the other three student samples was to reflect on their own personal and academic growth. The four samples combined are representative of the work students at the high school complete and the range of their language abilities.

Every semester, each interdisciplinary team of teachers comes up with scoring criteria based on the thematic unit to be studied and the previous semesters' scoring criteria. Once revised, the scoring criteria are presented to the students at the beginning of the semester to provide a description of what is expected of the students. These scoring criteria can be, and often are, tied to New York's content standards as well.

To graduate from the Brooklyn International High School, every student is required to develop a graduation portfolio that demonstrates fluency in both English and his/her native language. In addition, the portfolio must include post-graduation plans, a final mastery statement and self-evaluation, and samples of work that show mastery of each academic discipline. Every senior works intensively with a teacher mentor throughout the year to complete the portfolio tasks. As part of the portfolio, by the year 2000, each student will be required to create a home page on the World Wide Web (The Brooklyn International High School, 1997).

Challenges

Scoring of portfolios at The Brooklyn International High School can be a difficult task. Each student chooses different entries to meet the above-listed requirements, so teachers are confronted with different types of portfolio entries to meet the same criteria. As the portfolio assessment program has been emerging, teachers at The Brooklyn International High School have struggled with various forms, and the scoring tools are constantly being refined. Teachers and students work together to continue to improve the process and to find the system that works best for them and fills the need to be accountable to stakeholders outside of The Brooklyn International High School.

The question of whether the portfolio program is rigorous enough has been posed among the staff at The Brooklyn International High School. To counter this, teachers have developed scoring rubrics that allow them give single scores to portfolios, as shown below.

0	No credit
1	Needs improvement
2	Acceptable
3	Good
4	Excellent

This reporting scale is used by most interdisciplinary teams at The Brooklyn International High School and is augmented by comments written by the teachers describing each student's progress toward the goals set at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the previous semester. These written comments are also included on the students' report cards in abbreviated form.

Because the student work included in a portfolio has been evaluated twice, once during the course of the semester and a second time as part of the student's portfolio presentation, students have multiple opportunities to reflect on their work and the degree to which their work meets scoring criteria. According to Sara Newman, principal of The Brooklyn International High School, and assessment experts who work with English language learners (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1998), an iterative assessment model such as that used at The Brooklyn International High School encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and is a very powerful motivational force.

Benefits

Ms. Newman speaks enthusiastically about portfolio assessment both as an assessment tool and as a means for improving teaching and student learning. Her own experience as a reading specialist led her to realize that standardized tests don't show what students know and can do. According to Ms. Newman, performance-based assessments provide a solid indication of student knowledge and ability, with portfolios being among the most powerful forms of performance assessment. Rather than showing a snapshot of student ability, portfolios can be likened to a slide show, presenting an ongoing portrait of student work. They also allow students to see the connections between disciplines within the thematic units they are studying and give them insight into their own learning paths. This metacognition leads to improved teaching and student learning. Both teachers and students reflect on their work as a

result of participation in the portfolio program (Newman, S., personal communication, January 16, 1997).

A real testimonial to the promise of portfolio assessment is the level of teacher commitment to the portfolio assessment project at The Brooklyn International High School. Teachers spend a great deal of time working with their interdisciplinary teams each summer to refine their portfolio requirements and the scoring criteria upon which the portfolios are judged. Then, at the end of each semester during “portfolio week,” students work on their portfolios with their teachers and present them to evaluation teams consisting of teachers, students, and visitors. The information that the portfolios provide helps teachers improve their courses for future teaching.

The real test of The Brooklyn International High School’s portfolio program came at the end of the 1997-98 school year, when school officials collected information including the number of students graduating from The Brooklyn International High School (100% of the class matriculated in 1994-1995) and the percentage of graduates planning to attend post-secondary educational institutions (93% of the seniors, all but one). Further data was available that allowed officials to compare the results of the portfolio assessment program with the scores of students who elected to take standardized college entrance exams such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). The results show that the Brooklyn International High School, like its partner in the International Schools Partnership, the International High School at La Guardia Community College, “passed the test” with flying colors. At the International High School at La Guardia Community

College, where a similar educational program is provided to limited English proficient students, upwards of 90% of twelfth grade students pass the Regent's Competency Tests, 95% graduate, and more than 90% are accepted each year at post-secondary schools (Ancess & Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Appendix A

This appendix is made up of materials used with students in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program in the Prince William County, Virginia public school system. The materials include the following:

- Instructions for the Use of ESOL Writing Rubric (a set of guidelines for giving scores) for students entering and leaving the ESOL Program
- The Writing Assessment Scoring Rubric
- The Writing Prompt, to be used with the Writing Rubric
- Reading/Writing Portfolio Cover Sheets for elementary, middle, and high school Students

**Prince William County ESOL Program
Instructions for the Use of ESOL Writing Rubric
for Placement and Exiting
DRAFT**

The purpose of this rubric is to assign a holistic score to a writing sample. The writing sample must be an unassisted first draft.

Placement Level for ESOL Programs

Use the rubric to determine a level (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6) for the writing sample. Select the level that best describes the writing sample holistically. To be assigned a level, the writing sample must meet at least the first three criteria. The criteria are arranged in order of importance. A student need not meet all criteria at each level to be assigned that level.

Meeting the Writing Exit Criteria

When a student consistently demonstrates the proficiency in writing at the exit level, with grade-appropriate competency in grammar and mechanics, the student has met the writing exit criteria. Refer to the “ESOL Writing Exit Chart” below to determine the exit level for each academic grade level.

ESOL WRITING EXIT CHART

Grades	Exit Level
1, 2	2
3	3
4-6	4
7-12	5

Prince William County Public Schools, VA
ESOL Writing Assessment Scoring Rubric—Draft #10

Level 6

- Writes multiple paragraphs with clear introductions, fully developed ideas and conclusion.
- Writes with a variety of sentence structures, using transition.
- Uses precise vocabulary.
- Writes with occasional grammatical errors.
- Makes few errors in punctuation and spelling.

Level 5

- Writes multiple paragraphs.
- Writes with a variety of sentence structures, using transitions.
- Uses varied and descriptive vocabulary.
- May have grammatical errors.
- Makes few errors in punctuation and spelling.

Level 4

- Organizes ideas in a paragraph.
- Uses some compound/complex sentence structures.
- May have frequent grammatical errors. (Elementary level may contain some grammatical errors.
- May write with some errors in punctuation, spelling and capitalization.
- Uses vocabulary relevant to purpose, though sometimes awkward.

Level 3

- Conveys a single idea using multiple sentences which may lack cohesion.
- Uses some compound/complex sentences. (Elementary level may use only simple sentences.)
- May have difficulty with grammatical items (e.g., subject-verb agreement, pronouns, tenses) and syntax.
- Writes with frequent errors in punctuation, spelling and capitalization.
- Uses high-frequency vocabulary, sometimes omitting words.

Level 2

- Writes phrases or simple sentences.
- Lists ideas which may be related.
- Uses repetitive vocabulary.
- Uses little or no mechanics.
- Uses temporary (transitional) spelling.
- Native-language influence may be evident across all criteria.

Level 1

- Writes single words and word combinations.
- Copies from model.
- Uses letter strings or symbols to convey meaning.
- Draws pictures to convey meaning.
- Student may meet any one criterion at this level.

Prince William County, Virginia, ESOL Program
Writing Prompt
(For Use with the ESOL Writing Rubric)
DRAFT

Purpose

The purpose for the administration of this writing prompt is to obtain a uniform writing sample from all grade levels, for establishing reliability of the ESOL Writing Rubric. Teachers are required to administer this prompt to each student, and to assign a level using the rubric.

Each teacher will then bring to our first staff development meeting a writing sample that clearly reflects each level of the rubric. (Make seven copies of each example.) Teachers may also bring any other writing samples that seem difficult to assess to the meeting for discussion. If any teacher is unable to attend this meeting, send the writing samples to Beverly Hartung at Stonewall Middle School.

Teacher Guidelines for the Prompt

Students need to provide at least a half page of writing, but may write more. Use the writing paper that is appropriate to the grade levels at your school. Students may have up to one half hour to write their response.

It is important to remember that this is a writing sample for which no peer or teacher assistance should be given. Students may not use

dictionaries, writing models, or any other reference. Use the prompt only as stated in the directions.

Directions for Administering the Prompt

1. Distribute a prompt to each student. Allow time for the students to read the prompt to themselves.
2. Read the prompt aloud to the students.
3. Then read the **Oral Directions**, allowing think-time at each pause.

Writing Prompt **DRAFT**

Choose a special day to write about.

It could be a holiday, a memory of a special day,
a day of the week, or any day you think is special.

Oral Directions: “Do you have a special day in mind? (pause) Remember, I don’t know anything about your special day. I want you to tell me who was there (pause), what happened (pause), when it happened (pause), where it happened (pause), and why it was special to you....”

Prince William County Public Schools, VA
ESL Program
Elementary Reading/Writing Portfolio

Student _____ ESOL Ctr. _____
 Teacher _____ Grade _____
 Level _____ School _____
 School Year _____

Required Contents	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
1. Content-sample (e.g., reading comprehension sample, project, report, journal)				
2. Written text summary (writing or drawing)				
3. Writing sample (student choice)				
4. Self-assessment (reading/writing goals)				
Optional Contents				
1. List of books/stories read in class				
2. List of books/stories read independently				
3. Reading interest inventory				
4. Literacy development checklist				
5. Oral text summary (cassette)				
6. Student choice (any type)				
Teacher Comments:				
Placement				
Parent Comments				

Prince William County Public Schools, VA
ESL Program
Middle School Reading/Writing Portfolio

Student _____ Grade _____
 Teacher _____ School _____
 Level _____ School Year _____

Required Contents	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
1. Writing sample				
2. Reading passage (cloze or comprehension)				
3. List of books read				
4. Self-rating strategies checklist				
Optional Contents				
1. Content area samples				
2. Oral language samples				
3. Illustrations				
4. Other				

Teacher Observations

1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter

Parent Comments

_____ Signature	_____ Signature	_____ Signature	_____ Signature
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Prince William County Public Schools, VA
ESL Program
High School Reading/Writing Portfolio

Student _____ Grade _____
 Teacher _____ School _____
 Level _____ School Year _____
 Date of Entry _____

Required Contents	1st Qtr	2nd Qtr	3rd Qtr	4th Qtr
1. Reading text with comprehension questions				
2. Cloze test				
3. Writing sample				
4. Written response to oral stimulus				
5. Written response to prompt/literature				
6. Self-rating strategies checklist				
7. Student choice				
Optional Contents				
1. Content area samples				
2. Oral language samples (including native language)				
3. List readings with short synopsis				
4. Oral response IPT				
5.				

1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Test scores LPT _____		Test scores LPT _____	
_____ Signature	_____ Signature	_____ Signature	_____ Signature

Appendix B

This Appendix contains a variety of materials used with students at The Brooklyn International High School in Brooklyn, New York.

Cover Sheet for the Requirements of the Action/Reaction portfolio.

This cover sheet describes for the students the required contents of each portfolio.

I. Letter: Personal and Academic Growth. Each portfolio must include a letter that the student has written describing his or her personal and academic growth during the semester.

II. Best Work. Students must also describe their best work for each teacher during the semester. This Appendix includes sheets to be filled out for four of the teachers (Hoa, Leah, Stacie, and Susan).

III. Work I would like to do over. Students must also include an evaluation of a project that needs improvement.

IV. Essay. An essay that summarizes the student's understanding of the theme must be included.

V. Goals. A statement delineating three goals for the next semester is required.

Also included in this Appendix are:

Portfolio: Checklist and Presentation. At the end of the school year, students prepare for a presentation of their portfolios to a small group of teachers, other students, and possibly an outside observer.

This document provides students with a checklist to be completed prior to the presentation, and some directions on the presentation.

Portfolio Presentation Grading. A copy of the scoring criteria that teachers use to rate the presentation.

Portfolio Preparation: Daily Class Log. A daily class log that helps students complete the task of pulling their portfolio together for their presentation.

Four examples of student self-assessment of their work. The assignment for the first student sample was to reflect on the connection of all her classes to the theme of Growth. The assignment for the other three student samples was to reflect on their own personal and academic growth. The four samples combined are representative of the work students at the high school complete and the range of their language abilities.

Cover Sheet for the Requirements of the Action/Reaction portfolio

Action/Reaction: Hoa, Leah, Stacie, Susan Name

Portfolio: What is it?

1. What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of work which shows what you have done over time. You usually present your portfolio to a small group of teachers, students, and people from outside the school. You will need a portfolio to graduate from high school.

A portfolio:

- shows what you have learned
- communicates to others what you know and understand
- shows your growth and progress
- shows the quality of your work
- shows your effort and attitude in school
- shows the work that you think is important

2. What goes into a portfolio?

A portfolio can include:

- activity guides
- group projects
- individual projects
- work from presentations
- photographs
- videos
- something you are proud of
- something you want to improve

The following pages explain what you will put in your portfolio for this semester and how you will present your portfolio.

Name _____

I. Letter: Personal and Academic Growth

Directions:

You will begin your portfolio with a letter to the reader that talks about your personal and academic growth during the semester. In the letter do the following:

- Write about an important accomplishment. What was it, how did you achieve it, and why was it important?
- Write about three specific things you have done to help yourself learn and grow. What were they and why did they help you learn and grow?
- Write about three specific things you have done to help your language skills progress. What were they and why did they help your language skills?
- Write about a positive group work experience you had and a negative group work experience you had. What made the experience positive and what made the experience negative?

Dear Reader:

II. Best Work

Directions:

For this part of your portfolio, you will answer questions about the best work that you chose for each class.

Hoa's Class

Name of work:

1. Describe the work you did.

2. What did you learn from this work?

Name _____

II. Best Work — Leah's Class

Name of work:

1. Describe the work you did.

2. What did you learn from this work?

Name _____

II. Best Work — Stacie's Class

Name of work:

1. Describe the work you did.

2. What did you learn from this work?

Name _____

II. Best Work — Susan's Class

Name of work:

1. Describe the work you did.

2. What did you learn from this work?

Name _____

III. Work I would like to do over

Directions:

For this part of your portfolio, you will answer questions about the work that you would do over if you had the chance. You can choose work from any class.

Name of work:

1. Describe the work.

2. Why do you think you did not do a good job on this work?

Name _____

IV. Essay

Actions and reactions are part of everyday life. Why do you think we are studying actions and reactions? In your answer, you need to give three examples to prove your ideas. At least two examples need to be from your classes, and one may be from your personal experiences.

Paragraph 1: Introduce what you will talk about in the essay.

Paragraph 2: Use work from one class to prove why you think we are studying actions and reactions

Paragraph 3: Use work from a second class to prove why you think we are studying actions and reactions.

Paragraph 4: Use work from a third class or from your personal experiences to prove why you think we are studying actions and reactions.

Paragraph 5: Conclude your essay. In this paragraph, you will summarize what you wrote about in this essay.

USE NOTEBOOK PAPER FOR THE ESSAY

Name _____

V. Goals

Reflect on what you have learned and accomplished this semester. Set three goals for next semester. For each goal, tell how you will achieve these goals (plan).

Two of these goals must help you to improve in school next semester. The third goal can be a goal for outside of school. Remember your goals need to be:

- specific
- realistic
- important to you
- challenging

Goal 1:

Plan for Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Plan for Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Plan for Goal 3:

Portfolio: Checklist and Presentation

Checklist:

Does your portfolio have:

- _____ I. Letter about personal and academic growth
- _____ II. Answers to questions about best work in each class
 - _____ Best work in Hoa's class
 - _____ Best work in Leah's class
 - _____ Best work in Stacie's class
 - _____ Best work in Susan's class
- _____ III. Answers to questions about work you would want to do again
- _____ IV. _____ Essay
- _____ V. Goals

Presentation:

In small groups (4-5 students and 1 teacher), you will present some of your portfolio. A teacher will tell you the day and time for your presentation. You will talk 10-15 minutes. Then there will be 10-15 minutes for questions and evaluations.

For the presentation:

- Talk about your work; do not simply read what you have written. This means you will have to practice what you say before the presentation.
- Talk clearly and loudly.
- Talk about what you wrote in your letter.
- Talk about your best work from 2 classes.
- Talk about your essay.
- Be prepared to answer questions from the people listening.

Portfolio Presentation Grading

Presenter's name _____

Listener's name _____

Talks about the work (does not simply read):

No Credit Needs Improvement Satisfactory Very Good Excellent

Talks clearly and loudly:

No Credit Needs Improvement Satisfactory Very Good Excellent

Personal/academic growth letter:

No Credit Needs Improvement Satisfactory Very Good Excellent

2 samples of best work:

No Credit Needs Improvement Satisfactory Very Good Excellent

Essay:

No Credit Needs Improvement Satisfactory Very Good Excellent

Goals:

No Credit Needs Improvement Satisfactory Very Good Excellent

Answers listeners' questions:

No Credit Needs Improvement Satisfactory Very Good Excellent

Comments:

Grade: _____

Possible Grades:

A - Excellent **B** - Very Good **C** - Satisfactory **D** - Needs Improvement
NC - No Credit

Written Portfolio: Teacher/Reader Evaluation

Student's name _____

Portfolio organization and completion:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Personal/Academic growth letter:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Best work for Hoa's class:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Best work of Leah's class:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Best work for Stacie's class:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Best work for Susan's class:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Work to do over:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Essay:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent
Goals:				
No Credit	Needs Improvement	Satisfactory	Very Good	Excellent

Comments:

Grade: _____

Possible Grades:

A - Excellent **B** - Very Good **C** - Satisfactory **D** - Needs Improvement

NC - No Credit

Preparation Grade: _____

Presentation Grade: _____

Written Portfolio Grade: _____

Overall Portfolio Grade: _____

Action/Reaction: Leah, Hoa, Stacie, Susan

Fall 1996

Portfolio Preparation: Daily Class Log

Student Name _____

January	17	21	22	23	17	21	22	23	17	21	22	23	17	21	22	23
Attendance																
Preparation																
Cooperation																
Concentration																

Choices of work to include in portfolio, due Friday 1/17 Handed In? Yes / No

Comments:

Friday, January 17 _____

Tuesday, January 21 _____

Wednesday, January 22 _____

Thursday, January 23 _____

Grade for Portfolio Preparation: _____

Grading Explanation:

Excellent - √+

Satisfactory - √

EXAMPLES OF STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

How do you see growth in what you've learned this semester?

In all of my classes we have studied about growth, but what exactly I have learn from those four classes?

When we first started to talk about growth, I thought that I will not find anything that have to do with growth in my math and humanities classes. I knew that in science and human development class we will be talking about it, because the name speaks for itself.

But I was wrong about math and humanities. I did find something about growth in all of my classes, everything was related to each other.

For me in math class the most related project to growth was about population growth. This was about how the population changes in different countries. For example, to find out the number of population in any country we need to know the rate of birth and death percentage and also how many people emigrate and immigrate each year. By using these information we can see if the population is growing or regressing. All these information's about the population growth in this class we can compare to the humanities class, where we were talking about the Chinese immigration to U.S.

In the 19th Century the Chinese started to immigrate to America, because they were poor and had no food. At that time in China there was a problem of overpopulation, there was too many people in that country.

Also what made Chinese emigrate, were the Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion. In 1848 people found gold in California, and the big gold rush started. One of the main nationalities that came to look for the gold were the Chinese people. From that time the big immigration started, people from all over the world were coming to U.S. and it never stopped even the gold is not there anymore. People brought their belongings and their culture with them. From that time many different cultures grew in U.S. and people are living in peace even there are so many cultures combined.

In science class, we were learning about how the human body looks, works, and grows from the outside and the inside. We studied about all body systems and how they work with each other. We also looked at the human skeleton, we even drew the whole skeleton system with other five important body organs. In that class generally we looked at the human body how it changes and how it grows.

The human development class was about all kinds of birth control, the sexually transmitted diseases. The disease that we concentrated the most was AIDS, we studied how we can get it, how it grows in our bodies and the most important thing, what to do to not get it. Also in this class we learned how to talk about sex with no shame, our personal opinions grew about sex. For many of us this class showed how important it is to have safe sex or to have it with only one partner who you trust.

In this class we talked how people are changing and developing emotionally and physically, we are more mature, we should know about all these things like sex, AIDS, rape or drugs in our age, because this can happen to us.

All things I have learned in the past semester helped me grow. I could see that everything around us grows in different ways. This can be useful for me in the future, because by knowing all those things I can do well in my live and stay save from world disasters like AIDS.

Used with permission of the author.

I. Letter: Personal and Academic Growth

Directions:

You will begin your portfolio with a letter to the reader that talks about your personal and academic growth during the semester. In the letter do the following:

- Write about an important accomplishment. What was it, how did you achieve it and why was it important?
- Write about three specific things you have done to help yourself learn and grow. What were they and why did they help you learn and grow?
- Write about three specific things you have done to help your language skills progress. What were they and why did they help your language skills?
- Write about a positive group work experience you had and a negative group work experience you had. What made the experience positive and what made the experience negative?

Dear Reader:

I think that I got rid of a thing that really was great for me. I got rid of my fear of speaking English (I don't say that anybody else can do it). This really was a great accomplishment for me because before I got rid of the fear I knew I could speak some English but I was so scared. I was scared that everybody will laugh hearing my pronunciation or my accent I was so scared to speak English that I was scared that somebody just come and ask me a question. Because if it does then I will have to talk.

To beat my fear of speaking English I had to face it, and I realized that even if I had an accent or bad pronunciation the worst thing that can happen to me is that the person don't understand. So I kept talking English at home and to people and now I feel much better, but I am still a little scared to talk with kids my age because they are less understanding than adults so they making more fun of people than adults.

To help myself learn and grow first I plan tennis because it is really like a drug for me. If I don't plan tennis I feel excited and jumpy all the time I feel like talking 24 hours on 24 hours, I think because playing tennis kick the energy I have out of my body. And only God know how well this sport kick the energy out of my body.

The second thing that help me learn and grow is concentration some teachers may have a hard believing that I can concentrate but I can. I really do it, doesn't seem like it, but I really can concentrate. Concentrate is really helping me learning and grow because it really get my mind in one place.

And finally, another thing that help me learn and grow is not having a boring teacher because if I have a boring teacher I don't feel like working a lot.

I think we all need an unborning teacher sometimes.

The first thing I did to help my language skills is talk, all I did was talk and it just came.

The second thing I did was read a lot of books, the more your read, the more your spelling be accurate and without mistakes. And also when you read you are learning new vocabulary words. And really the third thing that help my language skills I listen and pay attention of what every teacher says because some people think that because they don't speak english they don't have to listen but au contraire the more you listen the quicker you'll understand.

I had a great group work experience in the beginning of the class. Hoa gave us (each member of each group) different pieces of puzzle and without talking and pointing we had to resolve the puzzle this really prove that we can't work in group really well without communication.

I never had any negative group work experience.

Letter: Personal and Academic Growth

(A) A: Write about an important accomplishment. B: What was it, C: how did you achieve it, D: And why was it important?

(A) Dear Reader,

My name is_____. I want write about my personal and Academic Growth. When I came in B.I.H.S. it made me happy. It made me to learn much. I could use Bangali to talk Bangali student. AT B.I.H.S. I was able to some Computer skill too. There are why I am happy to come in B.I.H.S.

This is an example of personal and Academic Growth Because when I was in my J.H.S. I was not able to speak mach English. I did not feel too happy them, because I did not understand much of school. There were not bangali student to friend with. There were many bad boys there. And no able to use computer for student. Any some time J.H.S. student fight with each other in the bus. And the bus driver not stop the bus in the stops near school. And I have to come walk to home from school. And I was not able to do my home work. Because I don't understand English also I was not able to talk to my teacher about home work. It all was traffic for me. But now in B.I.H.S. is no more traffic for me.

It all I say in last page it all important to me. Because what I cant do in my J.H.S. now in B.I.H.S. I can do it all. For example:

I am not able to talk to English in my J.H.S.

Now in B.I.H.S. I am able to talk English with everybody.

To many bad boy in my J.H.S.

Now is no bad boy in my J.H.S. I think

I have to walk and go home from my J.H.S.

I never walk and go home from B.I.H.S.

No Bangali be a friend.

Now in B.I.H.S. lot of Bangali people to be friend and talk about school.

I was not able to do my homework.

In B.I.H.S. I am able to do my home work.

Lot of fight in the bus and to hard to stay in bus.

Now no more fight in train, I think is all save.

I was not able to talk about my teacher about my homework.

Now in B.I.H.S. I can talk to my teacher and I can complete my Home work every day in class.

So every comments is Important for me in B.I.H.S. in first semester. And I learn lot of activity and lot of computer and learn how to write the history and how to do presentation like this lot of way I Grow up Academic and personal in this semester of B.I.H.S.

(B) For Learn and Grow.

(1) WHAT: To speak much in English

WERE: To come in B.I.H.S.

WHY: Because if I want stay in U.S.A. I have to learn and grow in English.

(2) WHAT: I can do my all class work to easy and I understand to do all work.

WERE: In B.I.H.S. is make me easy.

WHY: Because in B.I.H.S. people come from different country and they did not know much English. So this way the B.I.H.S. make more easier from other school. That way I think.

(3) WHAT: I can read my country book from library.

WERE: In B.I.H.S.

WHY: Because the teacher think if student cant read English So they can read the native language book and translate in English.

(D) Negative and Positive work.

The positive group work experience I had is in B.I.H.S. they have group the group made up by 4 or 5 people. So if you don't understand the work the

group can help you to make your work positive. the positive make much work but the neagative did not make much work. The negative group work is if your group has 2 people if two did not understand. So the group cant help each other. So the work go in negative experience.

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My Essay

I'm going to talk about what my growth in what I learn in this semester.

How was this semester for me? This is the question that I always ask me and now I find a answering. This semester was very special for me because was the first one in this school and I learn a lot. Like I never present a porfolio, and know I'm going to learn how present one. In others school like when I was before, I just took REGENTS, RCT and other kinds of tests, but I never present a porfolio, thats how I'm learning and understant things that in others school don't teach me before, because they don't teach very well, just because have a lot student and can't teach well to the student at the same time you can't learn well. Also in others school we just have 30 minutes and here we have One hour and ten minutes and we have the necessary time to study to understant. My ideas is graduate from here and get a good record to feel happy by myself.

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Glossary

assessment: an exercise, such as a written test, portfolio, or experiment, that seeks to measure a student’s skills or knowledge in a subject area.

assessment portfolio: the systematic collection and evaluation of student work measured against predetermined scoring criteria, such as scoring guides, rubrics, checklists, or rating scales.

authentic assessment: an assessment that has a high degree of similarity to real-world experiences.

benchmark: samples of student work that represent expected levels of performance.

CTBS (California Test of Basic Skills): a norm-referenced test used by many districts to assess student achievement.

criterion-referenced assessment: an assessment that measures a student’s achievement against a set of criteria, rather than against the performance of others who take the same test, such as norm-referenced tests.

English language learner: a student who is learning English as a second or additional language, and may or may not require ESL or bilingual support as they acquire English.

ESL/English as a second language: a term used to refer to students who receive bilingual or ESL support services, or to a program that provides instruction in English language acquisition.

inter-rater reliability: consistency of scoring among raters (those assessing and scoring students' work).

ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills): a norm-referenced test used by many districts to assess student achievement.

large-scale assessment portfolio: assessment portfolios that are used throughout a school district or state educational system.

limited English proficient student: a student learning English as a second or additional language who has been identified as needing ESL or bilingual education support services.

manipulatives: objects such as colored blocks or tiles that students use to explore, apply, and connect different concepts and skills.

MSPAP (Maryland School Performance Assessment Program): a performance assessment program used in the state of Maryland.

norm-referenced test: an objective test that is standardized on a group of students whose performance is evaluated in relation to the performance of others.

performance standard: the levels of achievement that pupils must reach to receive particular grades in a criterion-referenced grading system or to be certified at particular levels of proficiency.

performance-based assessment: an assessment that requires students to perform hands-on tasks, such as writing an essay, or conducting a science experiment. Student performance is rated based on the process the student engages in and/or based on the product of his/her task.

portfolio: a systematic collection of representative student work throughout a course or class year.

prompt: an assignment or directions asking the student to undertake a task or series of tasks.

rating scale: a written list of performance criteria associated with a particular activity or product. Rating scales are used by observers or raters to assess the pupil's performance on each criterion in terms of its quality.

raw score: the number of items that are answered correctly on a test or assessment.

reliability: consistency of results from an assessment or test, when administered to the same individuals on different occasions. A statistical term that defines the extent to which errors of measurement are absent from a measurement instrument, such as rubric.

rubric: a set of guidelines for giving scores. A typical rubric states all the dimensions being assessed, contains a scale, and helps the rater place the given work properly on the scale.

self-assessment: the process by which students examine and evaluate their own work, based on pre-determined criteria.

standard: A statement describing what students should know and be able to do as a result of their coursework.

validity: the accuracy with which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure.

whole language: an approach to teaching reading that focuses on meaning and includes the reading and discussion of good literature. In contrast, a

phonics-based approach to teaching reading involves the direct teaching of the sound-letter correlations in decoding, and focuses more on discrete reading skills rather than overall reading comprehension. A good whole language program should include some phonics instruction.

Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey: A test that establishes language proficiency in English or Spanish.

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