

Superior-Greenstone District School Board

The Professional Portfolio for Aspiring Leaders

“To Know Thyself!”

Thousands of years ago the Greeks carved above their temples that phrase ‘Know thyself,’ two simple words that imply a lifetime of investigation. Throughout the ages philosophers and scholars emphasized the importance of self-knowledge as an outcome of learning.

Brown 2002

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1. Introduction

Like other professionals, teachers and administrators need evidence of their growth and achievement over time. The professional portfolio is a vehicle for documenting and presenting that evidence of continuous professional learning throughout your career. We encourage our students to select examples of their work over time to demonstrate how much they've learned, and we should do the same.

Portfolios allow individuals to become reflective about what it is they do. And they allow individuals to document the practices they'd like to preserve, improve and even pass on to others. Since a portfolio is a careful record of specific accomplishments attained over an extended period of time, it will be work in progress- an ever-changing, living document.

The development of a professional portfolio, without question, is a time consuming exercise which requires at one level the collection of artifacts and at another level deep reflection on the part of the practitioner. Brown (2002), in an extensive study of adult learning, draws three key findings associated with the development of portfolios:

- (a) a marked increase in participants' self-knowledge....
- (b) a greater recognition of the value of learning from work....
- (c) improved communication and organizational skills, and greater appreciation of the role of reflection in recognizing learning. (p. 242)

2. What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection and showcase of artifacts documenting your work and accomplishments – but it is also much more. The professional portfolio is “a self-assessment of attributes, skills and goals resulting from personal reflection and professional dialogue. It uses authentic evidence to communicate a portrait of leadership and a plan for growth” (Green, 2004, p.2). When you create your portfolio you will be assessing your strengths and areas which need improvement for your own personal growth. Your portfolio is a vehicle to capture your own leadership qualities.

3. What goes into a portfolio?

The portfolio describes and documents, through solid evidence, the abilities of a unique individual, and therefore, no two portfolios will look alike. A variety of artifacts related to your professional teaching or learning go into a portfolio. Some examples are:

- Your career goals, documentation of strategies used and progress towards your goals
- Your educational philosophy, or mission statement
- A copy of your resume
- Letters of reference
- Transcripts
- Academic and other awards, certificates
- Documents you have authored
- Photographs
- Published/Unpublished articles
- Research conducted
- Workshops attended or presented

- Evaluation reports
- 360° reports (if available)
- Instructional units: Lesson plans, teaching and assessment materials
- Student work
- Reports or research summaries
- Practicum
- Certificates indicating professional development
- Newspaper clippings, newsletters, etc.
- Reflective commentary, summary of professional learning

A narrative component or rationale is often provided to explain each artifact.

4. How do I organize the portfolio?

The process of portfolio development commences with *reflection*. The individual must reflect upon the meaning of effective school leadership and consider what might be evidence of that effective leadership. The gap between the image and the actual evidence represents the basis for professional development.

The image is nicely captured in the Ontario Leadership Framework. Five domains are described as well as practices, skills and competencies, and attitudes. The Framework should guide the selection, organization and analysis of the artifacts. Items can also connect to the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) suggests that a portfolio should be:

- Structured- organized, complete, creative, readable format, the content is representative of the purpose, evidentiary
- Representative – comprehensive, represent the scope of one's work
- Selective – concise, limited to what is required by the reviewer while also keeping the purpose in mind, quality not quantity

Although the organization of the material may vary, the key sections are as follows:

The Professional Portfolio

- Table of Contents
- Resume
- Philosophy of Education
- Artifacts – Leadership Framework
- Growth Plan (and timeline)
- Performance Plan
- Supporting Documents
- References

The organization of the artifact section of the portfolio needs special consideration. There are many acceptable approaches to organizing the artifacts and, ultimately, the material must be beneficial to the individual; however, in order to achieve the highest levels of reflection, the organization must be structured by **The Ontario Leadership Framework.**

NOTE: Portfolios or parts of a portfolio can take different forms - paper, video, powerpoint, digital or other technological formats.

The following is a list of some general strategies on developing a portfolio:

- Start as early as possible.
- Plan well and systematically collect data.
- Develop a good filing system.
- Regularly sort through, organize, and update information.
- Involve others as consultants and contributors.

5. What is the difference between the Professional Portfolio and The Interview Portfolio?

The Professional Portfolio is a document that contains many of the original artifacts and extends over a considerable period of time. It is likely a rather massive document.

The Interview Portfolio is designed specifically for a promotion interview. The following sets out the required contents:

The Interview Portfolio

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Section 1: | Covering Page
Philosophy of Education (1 page summary) |
| Section 2: | Related documents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resume• OCT/PQP Qualifications• Other |
| Section 3: | Emotional Intelligence Survey Data: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey results• Candidates reflection and next steps based on survey results |
| Section 4: | Leadership Framework Practices and Competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 examples/artifacts of leadership from each of the 5 domains• Reflection of learning from the experience/example• Reflection on how this learning applies to the role of principal or vice-principal |
| Section 5: | Candidate's Learning Plan, Growth Plan or Performance Plan depending upon current position. |
| Section 6: | Recent Performance Appraisal or a letter from their principal where a PA does not exist. |
| Section 7: | Other Related Evidence |

Section 8:

3 Letters of Reference:

- Area Superintendent
- Immediate supervisor (principal or vice-principal)
- Other to act as character reference (e.g. colleague)

6. What do I present during an interview?

In making a presentation, always keep your audience's key question in mind: *Is this person ready for the key leadership role?* Beyond the specific direction provided by the selection committee, the candidate must identify the items from the Interview Portfolio that will be presented. In particular, candidates need to describe specific leadership activities with clear evidence to support the initial selection of the initiative, the development of the plan, the analysis of the outcomes, and the assessment of their leadership.

7. References

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- www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4148
- www.mcgill.ca/edu-e3ftoption/portfolios/