

Presenting a Mini-Portfolio to Next Year's Teacher

Notes to the Teacher

This is one of my favorite assignments because it serves as a capstone project at the end of the academic year. It asks students to utilize a variety of valued skills. It requires them to reflect on past academic projects, to think about the skills they have attained, to summarize, and to present themselves in the thoughtful ways that professionals do.

Assignment Rationale: Reflection and meta-cognitive awareness are essential ingredients in this project. By asking students to review their learning and related work projects from the entire academic year, we tie together varied learning experiences from the school year. This assignment asks students to look at themselves as both learners and workers; it also asks them to reflect on their own academic growth. As a writing assignment, it is an excellent opportunity to practice elaborating their ideas with specific details and examples.

Special Considerations: While this project culminates at the end of the school year, you will want to announce it much earlier in the year. Students need to be aware that they need to collect and keep work products from throughout the year. It will be helpful for you to discuss this project periodically during the year. In fact, when you announce it early in the year you might require students to establish a specific plan for collecting work to go into their mini-portfolios. The logistical issues of collecting work samples will depend, of course, on your class. If most artifacts to be included in the mini-portfolio are pieces of writing, a simple folder will do. If the work samples are likely to include tapes, videos, photographs, artwork, posters, or other products, other arrangements will be necessary.

Differentiating the Assignment: To simplify the collection process for some students, you might specify several work projects to focus on for this project. Determining for students which work projects will be included in the mini-portfolio reduces the organizational demands on the students. It also allows them to focus more on the reflection aspect of this assignment and makes it easier for you to support these students in their attempts at describing their portfolio items effectively. A possible modification of the assignment would be to require a different number of strengths to be explained. If the FCAs are too challenging for some students, another way to modify this project is to make two assignments out of it. For example, one assignment would be to describe the items in the mini-portfolio (FCAs: Explain what each work sample is; Give two reasons why you chose each; To be determined). The other assignment would be the explanation of the students' scholastic improvements or strengths (FCAs: Three strengths; Specific examples for each; To be determined).

For the “To be determined” FCA, consider these possibilities:

- Specific content area vocabulary
- Chronological order
- Avoiding overused terms
- Varying sentences
- Choose among several areas of conventions (complete sentences, paragraphing, capitalizing proper nouns, quotation marks)

About the Procedures: To simplify the collection of samples, you might create a mini-portfolio folder (or envelope, or box, or some other container) for each student that is kept in the classroom. Have students put their artifacts in the folder as the year goes on so that availability of the work samples does not hamstring the project late in the year. Some students will need more support and modeling from you in completing their Reflecting on My Learning Focus Sheet. Talking with students about the variety of skills and habits involved in your class will assist them in their reflections.

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Telling a New Teacher About Your School Accomplishments

Project Summary: One way to let others know about what we have learned and things we can do is to tell them. Another way is to show them. That is why artists have portfolios. Examples of their work let others know what they can do. That is also why students have portfolios. In this project, you are going to put together a mini-portfolio—several examples of your work from this class—and use it to help introduce yourself to your teacher of this subject next year. You will write a letter to accompany your mini-portfolio.

Writer's Purpose: Your purpose is to be informative. You want to “put your best foot forward” by telling and showing how you have developed this year in this class.

Writer's Role: You are writing as yourself, a student with good self-awareness. You know the things you are good at, things you need to work at harder, ways in which you have improved in this class, and which examples of your work products demonstrate your abilities.

Audience: You are writing to next year's teacher for this subject. This letter with a mini-portfolio is your way of introducing yourself to your new teacher.

Form: This will be a friendly letter to be accompanied by examples of your work from this class. You will begin your letter: *Dear Teacher,*

Focus Correction Areas:

1. Describe the items in your mini-portfolio (tell why you chose these examples of your work) _____ points
2. Three to five strengths (tell about things you do well or areas where you are making improvement in this class, or habits you feel you have that will serve you well next year—be specific) _____ points
3. To be determined _____ points

Procedures: To prepare your letter, you will complete several activities:

- ✓ Type One Writing: To help you think about what we did this year, write twelve lines or more about what this class will be like for incoming students next year. What kinds of things will they learn? What will they need to do to succeed?
- ✓ Based on the class discussion of your Type One Writing, we will make a list of: Things Learned, Projects Done, Study Habits Required, and other categories you suggest.
- ✓ To get you thinking about your letter and the samples of your work, you will complete a Focus Sheet for Reflecting on My Learning.
- ✓ You will have until _____ to collect examples.
- ✓ Draft your letter. Due date: _____.
- ✓ Read your draft in a one-foot voice and make any changes you feel will improve your review.

Focus Sheet

Reflecting on My Learning

Skills

Things I am good at in this class:

What I am getting better at:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Habits

Work and study habits important in this class:

Self-Assessment:

How am I doing with this habit?

_____	→	<input type="text"/>

Work Products

Possible samples for my mini-portfolio:

