

# PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENTS

## NARRATOR'S SCRIPT

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### INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The focus of this module is portfolio assessments.

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By the end of this module, you should be able to define a portfolio assessment, distinguish between its two types, identify the benefits and challenges of using portfolio assessments, and know that there is a “what-who-how” framework that you can use to design them.

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### KEY CONCEPTS

#### Portfolio Assessments

Now, let's get started.

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Portfolio assessments are not a type of assessment item, but rather a compilation of student work. Portfolio assessments ask students or teachers to collect work products that show growth over a specific period of time. Examples of work products include collections of student essays, artwork, lab reports or reading logs. We use scoring guides and rubrics to score portfolios.

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There are two main types of portfolio assessments: “instructional” or “working” portfolios, and “showcase” portfolios.

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#### Instructional Portfolios

Instructional or working portfolios are formative in nature. They allow a student to demonstrate his or her ability to perform a particular skill. For example, a working portfolio may include a collection of lab reports from over the course of the semester that highlight a student's improving ability to create hypotheses.

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#### Showcase Portfolios

Showcase portfolios are summative in nature. They include samples of a student's best work to demonstrate mastery at the end of a unit of study, semester or school year. A showcase portfolio may include several drafts of an essay with comments that indicate how each draft improves upon the last, with the most polished draft on the topic demonstrating a student's mastery of the relevant skills.

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Portfolio assessments offer several benefits. First and foremost, portfolios are a rich source of information about student learning. Unlike stand-alone assessments, portfolios are composed of multiple artifacts, which can paint a full picture of what students know and can do.

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Second, portfolios are versatile. You can use them to measure almost any content area or skill. In contrast to assessment items that are more granular and focused, portfolio assessments can contain a wide variety of student work to demonstrate mastery of a particular standard. These work products can include essays, lab reports, reading logs, photographs, journal entries, presentations, copies of assessments, conference notes from teachers and many other types of materials.

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Third, portfolio assessments can build students' self-confidence and "self-appraisal" skills through the opportunity they provide for students to reflect on and celebrate their accomplishments. Working portfolios can be helpful resources during parent-teacher conferences. Showcase portfolios can help students prepare for real-world careers. For example, photographers, journalists and graphic designers typically maintain a portfolio of their strongest pieces to show potential employers.

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Portfolio assessments come with challenges. Like performance tasks, portfolio assessments can be time consuming to design and score in a consistent and unbiased manner. They also involve a great deal of logistical planning and organization.

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## How to Use a What-Who-How Framework to Design Portfolio Assessments

Some of the details of this logistical planning and organization are beyond the scope of this module; however, you can use the first two steps of the assessment blueprint and a simple "what-who-how" framework to think at a high level about how to develop a portfolio assessment.

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You may not find the assessment blueprint to be helpful when you design portfolio assessments, although steps 1 and 2 will help you think through the materials you decide to collect.

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First, as the blueprint suggests, determine the primary purpose of the portfolio.

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Is the primary purpose of the portfolio formative (to monitor student progress and adjust instruction) or is it summative (to measure student mastery of the standards)?

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To answer this question, you can think about whether you are creating a working or showcase portfolio.

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Second, as the blueprint suggests, identify the standard or standards you will assess. Like any other assessment and assessment item, portfolio assessments should align with the relevant standards.

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Now, you're ready to follow the what-who-how framework to design your portfolio assessment.

## What

Consider what student work should go into the portfolio. What pieces of student work will you include in the portfolio to document students' mastery of the standards and skills you will assess?

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Will you include in the portfolio any student reflections on the selections? If so, how and when will you incorporate them? You can encourage students to reflect on the work products they include in their portfolios by asking them to annotate their work or complete a short writing exercise that explains why they believe the artifact demonstrates what they have learned or are able to do. These types of exercises will help build students' confidence to self-assess and guide their own learning in the future.

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As you would with each assessment item in an assessment, make sure that these assignments are clearly aligned with the relevant standards and skills.

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Also, consider the guidance you offer students if they select artifacts for their portfolios. The portfolio should not necessarily contain all of the student's work; rather, the student should carefully curate artifacts that paint an accurate and complete picture of his or her mastery of the standards.

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## Who

Generally, we select the type of portfolio (for example, working or showcase), but students can make decisions related to their portfolios as well. For example, students may decide how to annotate their work products or choose from multiple artifacts that demonstrate their mastery of the standards.

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Include your students throughout the process. Think about how you will involve your students to determine and understand the objectives and process of the portfolio assessment.

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## How

Consider when and how you will collect student work. When and how will you or the student place each piece of student work into the portfolio?

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You can share written procedures with students to help them select relevant work samples. Project logs can help you and your students keep track of their portfolio submissions. Make sure that you have carefully thought through the logistical issues, including what needs to be collected when, where you will store portfolios, and when and how students will access them. These considerations are crucial for both hard-copy and electronic portfolios.

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Create milestones for the collection process. When and how will you check in with students to review their project logs and help them manage the process to collect work products for their portfolios?

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Develop the scoring tool and strategy. How will you score the individual components of the portfolio?

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How will you score the portfolio as a whole? You may develop scoring guides or rubrics for individual components of the portfolio and/or a rubric to score the portfolio as a whole. Be sure to write or select tools that clearly show the students what success looks like. Refer to the module about scoring to help you.

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If you are working with other teachers, for example, your grade-level team or department, how will you ensure that you are all on the same page about the purpose and plan to implement and score your students' portfolio assessments? It is important to practice scoring student entries to achieve consistency in scoring. Again, refer to the module about scoring to help you.

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## CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

We have addressed the key concepts in this module, so let's review our goals.

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At the outset of this module, we set goals that you would be able to define a portfolio assessment, distinguish between its two types, identify the benefits and challenges of using portfolio assessments, and know that there is a "what-who-how" framework that you can use to design them.

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Although we cannot determine whether we have achieved all of these goals, let's use two assessment items to see if we have achieved two of the goals.

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Here's the first item:

Define in one or two sentences the difference between working and showcase portfolios.

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Pause this video if you want a few moments to think about your answer or discuss it with colleagues.

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A sample answer to the first item would be: Instructional or working portfolios are formative in nature. They allow a student to demonstrate his or her ability to perform a particular skill. For example, a working portfolio may include a collection of lab reports from over the course of the semester that highlight a student's improving ability to create hypotheses.

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Showcase portfolios are summative in nature. They include samples of a student's best work to demonstrate mastery at the end of a unit of study, semester or school year. A showcase portfolio may include several drafts of an essay with comments that indicate how each draft improves upon the last, with the most polished draft on the topic demonstrating a student's mastery of the relevant skills.

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Here's the second item:

Describe one benefit and one challenge of portfolio assessments.

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Pause this video if you want a few moments to think about your answer or discuss it with colleagues.

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A sample answer to the second item would be: Portfolio assessments are versatile. Teachers can use them to measure almost any content area or skill, and they can contain a wide variety of student work to demonstrate mastery of a particular standard. These work products can include essays, lab reports, reading logs, photographs, journal entries, presentations, copies of assessments, conference notes from teachers and many other types of materials. On the other hand, portfolio assessments involve a great deal of logistical planning and organization.

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## CONCLUSION

Good work! Thank you for completing the module on portfolio assessments. Please view additional modules to continue your learning.

## SOURCES

Kansas State Department of Education. "Assessment Literacy Project." <http://www.k-state.edu/ksde/alp>.