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Portfolios: Documenting a journey
Andrea Nolan and Bronwyn Reynolds

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Membership, publishing and general enquiries

Early Childhood Australia Inc.
PO Box 7105 Watson ACT 2602
T: (02) 6242 1800
F: (02) 6242 1818
Sales line: 1800 356 900 (freecall)
E: eca@earlychildhood.org.au
publishing@earlychildhood.org.au

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About the authors

Dr Andrea Nolan, Deakin University

Andrea Nolan is a senior lecturer at Deakin University where she co-ordinates Early Childhood Education degree courses. She is a qualified and experienced teacher who over the past 25 years has held a number of teaching positions in the early childhood, school, TAFE and higher education sectors. Her research interests include children's learning and the use of reflective practice as a way to enhance teachers’ professional growth and development.

Dr Bronwyn Reynolds, University of Tasmania

Bronwyn Reynolds is a senior lecturer at the University of Tasmania where she co-ordinates the Early Years Education degree course. Prior to this appointment Bronwyn was the Director of Early Childhood Teacher Education at Unitec in New Zealand. She has over 25 years of experience as a qualified early childhood teacher and held several positions in the school and higher education sectors. Bronwyn also has extensive experience as a professional development consultant. Her research interests include young children’s learning and effective documentation, and leadership in early childhood.

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Introduction

What is a portfolio?

Portfolios can be defined in different ways for various purposes. One way of viewing a portfolio is as a collection of organised, purposeful information and items by and about individuals that provide insights and an overview of learning and development over time. They can be visual and or aural records which capture the blending of process and product. We see this interface as interwoven and complementary—an integrated part of the whole, involving discovery, reflection, evaluation and communication.

Portfolios can include observations, photographic records, learning stories, conversations, reflections, artefacts, descriptions, questions and analysis. For practitioners, portfolios can be selective and structured collections of information about practice, gathered for specific purposes evidencing accomplishments in the context of a personal philosophy or ethos—for example, what you value and why you value it. For children and families, portfolios can offer the chance to become part of a collaborative process where all contributions are welcomed and add to the understanding of children learning in family and community contexts.
What separates portfolios from scrapbooks and books of memoirs is that they encourage a comprehensive and in-depth reflection of the journey, from a holistic perspective over time, legitimising future goals and expectations. Portfolios portray possibilities and future pathways that provide opportunities to scaffold, transform, monitor, review and evaluate learning and development in partnership with others.

Why develop a portfolio?

Some reasons portfolios are developed are to:

- document an individual’s journey of learning and development over time
- reflect on continually evolving practices and understandings
- provoke reflections concerning efforts and achievements
- plan for improvement and other learning and development possibilities
- portray and foster reflections on the utilisation of different learning styles
- demonstrate tools of engagement in the fusion of process and product in the learning and development journey
- foster a sense of belonging and wellbeing
- involve multiple voices in learning and development pathways.
Pre-service and field-based early childhood student teachers are often exposed to the notion of portfolios in a number of differing contexts (Woodward, 1998; Goodfellow, 2000). Some of these contexts employ a prescriptive perspective that can limit the potential of portfolios in the eyes of these future qualified practitioners. We hope your journey through this book will ignite possibilities for you, not limit them.

This book supports a journeying approach to documentation in which a portfolio can be seen as a way to capture that journey in an authentic and respectful manner. As you will see as you work your way through this book, it builds on the work of Goodfellow (2004) and Winsor (1998) relating to the fusion of process and product, and the portfolio being viewed as enriching and empowering for both early childhood practitioners as well as children. We hope you will feel inspired to begin documenting your own teaching and learning journey along with the children and families you work with.
The following chapters explain the effective use of portfolios and provide examples of what portfolios can look like and contain, ensuring that what is collected, reflected on and analysed provides a meaningful experience for those involved. Portfolios provide a means of self-reflection and analysis. As Goodfellow (2004) writes, ‘It is through this interrogation of practice that we can not only gain insight into our capabilities but also the theories, beliefs and values that underpin the wisdom of our professional practices’ (p. 63). The portfolio encourages the reflective perspective of the early childhood practitioner. Using the portfolio as a reflective tool, practitioner Jeni is able to constantly question her practice:

The portfolio I keep allows me to question my practice and ensure it is responsive to the children’s interests and understandings. Really for me it’s about questioning the normalising practices of early childhood and seeing how we can grow both personally and professionally. Its value is that it enables children’s ideas to be explored in multiple ways. All members of the community are encouraged to be part of the portfolio and I try to represent lots of different voices in my documentation. The portfolio outlines personal and professional beliefs through self-reflection guided by the following questions: ‘Why did I do what I do’, and ‘how does this shape my program?’

For children, the portfolio can act as a portrait of their learning journey. This form of documentation helps children make tangible sense of their past and present learning (Jones & Shelton, 2006). Children gain great enjoyment and a sense of pride when learning is captured and displayed and their articulation of these experiences is fostered. Carla, a kindergarten teacher, comments:

They are a way of celebrating and understanding children’s learning and development, particularly when the process is described along the way to the end product. Portfolios can help children to reflect on their work, to ask questions and analyse situations and events. And, when you monitor and discuss with the children their understandings through portfolios, it can promote a real partnership, especially with decisions about the content and goals for future learning. In doing this the children are encouraged to have ownership over their work and learning, and I think that’s really important.
These records of a child’s knowledge, understandings, skills and abilities can activate new insights and fresh perspectives.

By providing rich sources of documentation—including examples of a child’s learning stories, drawings, writings, constructions, songs, poems and self-reflections through photographs, aural and visual recordings, anecdotal notes and other observations—a kaleidoscope of learning and development is formed. These records of a child’s knowledge, understandings, skills and abilities can activate new insights and fresh perspectives, which is evident in Carla’s comments:

*I encourage the children to take their portfolio home to share their experiences and happenings with family members and together they negotiate possibilities for new understandings. Portfolios provide a valuable way to strengthen communication with family members and others, and so greater links between home and kindergarten can be fostered. Creating strong partnerships with all stakeholders can only build a child’s capacity for learning and development.*
Types of portfolio

There are various types of portfolio to serve different needs. The type of portfolio is determined by the purpose and intended audience. For example, a professional portfolio is most suitable for a job interview, with skills and knowledge acquisition clearly demonstrated (see p. 22 for details). Many early childhood practitioners choose to keep a reflective portfolio as a way of capturing the learning and development of all involved in a program to guide future planning. Children's individual portfolios and project-focused portfolios are becoming common features in centres as ways to document the richness of children's learning.

The characteristics of portfolios

Purpose
Portfolios often serve many purposes, although the aim needs to be established and clearly explained from the outset, in order to focus on the intended goals and expectations.

Philosophy
It is important to provide some form of philosophy statement. This carefully considered and framed statement is what unifies the processes and products documented in the portfolio.

Approach
The approach is often determined by the purpose and the type of materials collected. An individual's creativity will also impact on the approach chosen.

Content
A clear purpose, once established, will dictate what should be included and what should not. Questions relating to the relevance, authenticity, integrity, and rigour will also help steer decisions regarding content.

Design
This relates to the formatting and organisation of the document as a whole, and, in the case of children, empowering them in this decision-making process.
For children

The content of a portfolio will be determined by the centre’s or practitioner’s philosophy, approach, purpose and intended audience. Traditionally, in early childhood education and care, portfolios have represented a random collection of individual children’s work, often given to families at the end of the year. Portfolios have since evolved and are often compiled according to an organised and purposeful format.

Nowadays portfolios have become a comprehensive, evaluative and reflective tool for children, their families and practitioners, in the consideration of various works in progress and end products, including images of constructions/interactions, narratives, drawing and writing samples, and transcripts of conversations. They illustrate specific knowledge, skills, dispositions and achievements over time. They help children to construct and plan their own learning and development, and help practitioners and parents to guide and support children’s learning and development in an appropriate way. As Jones and Shelton (2006) state, ‘Portfolios can facilitate authentic learning. They offer a point-in-time portrait of one’s development as a learner’ (p. 1).

For practitioners

Johnson and Rose (1997) remind us that we have three decisions to make: (1) the purpose of the portfolio; (2) the form the portfolio will take; and (3) the content of the portfolio. Compiling a portfolio is very much influenced by the purpose (i.e. is it to be used to enable the compiler to become a more effective practitioner, or is it for accountability to oneself and others, or for promotion and employment?). What must be clear are the purpose(s) and audience(s) and that what is included in the portfolio contributes meaningfully through thoughtful selection. For example, if the portfolio is to be used to critically reflect on practice, then the content should demonstrate learning over time, revealing reflection and analysis and how this has led to growth as a practitioner, with the contents being a ‘reliable and trustworthy portrayal’ of the learning (Garman & Piantanida, 1991, p. 4).

Making your everyday practice visible, in whatever way you choose, helps you to better understand why you do what you do and how things could change for the future. A portfolio can be seen as a collection of ‘snapshots’ or ‘scenarios’ which, over time, provide the opportunity to see patterns, and changes and connected events. We can begin to see what we do and how we do it, and ask why from a more informed position. What becomes apparent is the complexity of professional practice.
Questions about the design of children's portfolios

Once the purpose of a portfolio has been determined, decisions need to be made about its design, which will to some extent determine the content. You will need to think about the following questions: How should the portfolios be structured? Who should determine this decision and why? What should be included and why?

Jules, an experienced practitioner, and his staff organise the children's portfolios according to the Multiple Intelligences (based on the work by Howard Gardner [1983, 1993]). The portfolio begins with a statement about the centre's philosophy and how they respect that children have different ways of knowing and understanding. A list of overall long-term goals for the children is also included at the front of the portfolio. Jules then outlines how the portfolio is structured into sections to reflect a child's strengths in each of the eight Multiple Intelligences. The children and staff together select work samples, observations and stories, with photographs that portray the child's learning and development in the different intelligences. Jules mentions that the intent of the portfolio is also to gain a broad representation of progression from an integrated and holistic perspective. This may be achieved through successive single items; for example, a number of drawings dated to show changes over time, or perhaps a series of photographs with documentation to highlight a child's work in progress to completion.
The Intelligences are:

**Self intelligence**—relates to emotional development. It is the ability to be aware of and understand one's own feelings and actions. Often children who are strong in this area prefer to work on their own.

**People intelligence**—is about social development. It is the ability to form relationships and includes ways that children work with others. Children who are strong in this area are usually friendly and outgoing, and generally they are excellent team players.

**Word intelligence**—relates to communication both orally and in written form, depending on the child's stage of development. It includes reading, writing, speaking and expressing ideas in words.

**Logic and maths intelligence**—is the ability to understand the concepts of number, sequence, patterns, categories and relationships by manipulating objects or symbols, and to reason and analyse.

**Music intelligence**—is about the ability to memorise songs and tunes, and sensitivity to rhythm, time and pitch. Musically intelligent children are usually sensitive to all kinds of sounds and everyday rhythms in the environment.

**Space and vision intelligence**—is the ability to design and create visual representations of the world. It also involves being able to identify and work out different patterns and manipulate spatial relationships. It includes artwork, mapping, designing and constructing diagrams, and drawing plans.

**Body intelligence**—is about the use of fine and large motor skills; for example, in art and craft work, the performing arts and sporting games.

**Naturalist intelligence**—relates to an ability to be attuned to the natural world: the land, sea, space, flora and fauna. It is also associated with an appreciation for natural geography and things such as rocks, clouds and stars.
Kiera, a recent graduate, decided to organise observations and documentation of the children's progress in a portfolio based on philosophic principles—such as empowerment, holistic development, family and community, and relationships—as documented in *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand Early Childhood Bicultural Curriculum Framework. There are five strands in this document, which could be used to effectively show children's learning and development in a portfolio. The strands are wellbeing (*mana atua*), belonging (*mana whenua*), contribution (*mana tangata*), communication (*mana reo*) and exploration (*mana aotāroa*) (Ministry of Education, 1996).

The United Kingdom's Early Years Curriculum is another example of how a philosophy underpins the curriculum, and could also be considered when designing and structuring children's portfolios. The six areas of learning are personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development (Dryden, Forbes, Mukherji & Pound, 2005).

An orientation for the design of a portfolio may also be one framed by curriculum areas set out by national, state or territory guidelines for early childhood education. What is important in this decision-making process is that practitioners think carefully about how they choose to present children's portfolios. The purpose, structure, content and overall aesthetics are critical considerations in the compilation of portfolios, along with the fact that the work involved can be time-consuming and resources may be limited (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer, 2008). Effective planning, organisation and collaboration are keys to creating a balance between the many different responsibilities necessary in the pursuit of a high-quality early childhood education and care program.
Questions about the design of practitioners’ portfolios

The portfolio design needs to be navigable, with clear pathways. This means that related documentation should be linked together in a purposeful way.

One of the first questions to ask is, how can you organise the information collected from various sources in a way that tells a story, not only for the compiler but also for others? The portfolio design needs to be navigable, with clear pathways. This means that related documentation should be linked together in a purposeful way. Consider your portfolio’s organising principles carefully, as these have to accomplish two purposes: (1) to allow materials to be presented in a logical way to aid the understanding of the audience; (2) to make the significance of each item selected for inclusion clear.

Some practitioners choose to use their philosophy as the framework for organising their portfolio. Goodfellow (2004) suggests that you start with a philosophical statement about your personal professional practices and use this to determine the type of ‘evidence’ (documentation, artefacts, etc.) required. Other practitioners use specific themes/topics as starting points (e.g. professional practice, professional knowledge and professional engagement, or professional attributes and belief/mission statements). Some use a more guided approach (Raban, Waniganayake, Nolan, Brown, Deans & Ure, 2007), documenting their past and present to construct the context for understanding practice. You could be guided by official documents relating to professional standards or codes of ethical practice, such as Early Childhood Australia’s Code of Ethics.
Heidi, an early career practitioner, organises her portfolio around her philosophical approach to teaching and learning. She begins with a statement about how she believes children develop and learn and then provides photographs of children engaged in the program, together with reflections and comments from the children, herself and other staff members. This has provided Heidi with a starting point for documenting what happens in her daily work.

Good organisation is the key to a useful portfolio. The development of a preliminary design identifying key points to be addressed (which may need to change as the process is under way) is encouraged before embarking on your journey.

In summary, the type of portfolio you decide upon will depend on the centre or the practitioner’s philosophy, and community understandings and collaborations. What needs to be remembered is that each portfolio is unique and reflects the individuality of those who contribute to documenting the learning and development journey. Compiling a portfolio can be a time-consuming process, so be sure to designate time to work on it and remember the process cannot be hurried. It must also be acknowledged that some people are more creative than others and better able to illustrate information. Assembling a portfolio is very much a creative process and can embrace many different presentation forms, some of which are highlighted in the following chapters.
Portfolios enable children to:

- talk about their work in a specific context
- listen to their voice and the voice of others
- become aware of their learning and development over time
- celebrate their learning and development with their peers, family and friends
- set future goals for themselves
- feel a sense of ownership of their work.

Viewing children through a lens that shows them as capable and competent encapsulates the need to support and value their ownership of learning. One way to acknowledge and celebrate this is to make learning visible and appreciate the child's voice. This can be achieved through documenting comments verbatim; for example, in a running record of observation, a learning story, or an interview.
An interview with children at an early learning centre: What do three- and four-year-old children know about reading?

Question: What is reading?

Marcia: A book
David: We have it after fruit
Tristan: Reading a book
Anika: I don't know
Xavier: It's when you have to be sensible and appropriate
Carolyn: Story time
Kieran: Well, it's about reading the words
Patricia: It's all about the alphabet
Shima: Looking at newspapers
Documenting children's comments can be quite illuminating for staff and parents because new knowledge and understandings can be revealed. Treating children with respect means that permission needs to be gained from them (if possible) and parents/guardians to record children's voices and collect items of work. Listening to the voices of young children is paramount if practitioners want to gain insights into how children view the world. It is also about children having the right to be listened to with respect. As Kinney (2005) states in relation to ‘the power of children's voices’ (p. 124):

We can see more clearly their amazing potential, their richness, their talents, their understandings and workings of the world, their feelings about themselves and other children around them as well as the adults who engage with them.

Listening to the voices of young children is paramount if practitioners want to gain insights into how children view the world.
Exploring an autumn tree with a class of four-year-old-children

The following dialogue between two four-year-old children illustrates well the ‘power of children’s voices’ (Kinney, 2005, p. 124)

Dana: These leaves you can draw and then you can copy them. First I’m going to draw an outline then I’m going to paint them.

Eliza: I didn’t copy them. I just traced the leaves and then I painted them too. I painted them red, yellow, green and orange because they’re autumn colours.

Dana: Do you know that when it’s autumn the leaves fall off deciduous trees but not evergreen ones?

Eliza: But sometimes leaves fall off trees also because it’s windy.

Dana: Well, I know that Jehovah creates autumn trees.

Eliza: What does create mean?

Dana: It means make.

Eliza: Well, I know that the colours red and green make brown.

Recognising that children learn through interactions means embracing sociocultural theories that highlight the importance of collaborative partnerships with children, families and communities (Fleer, Edwards, Hammer, Kennedy, Ridgway & Robbins, 2006). The promotion of multiple voices in children’s portfolios can result in a rich tapestry of documented exchanges that capture a sense of authenticity and holistic understandings of children’s learning and development. We need to invite the children to decide on which observations, conversations, samples of work and photographs, for instance, they would like placed in or removed from their portfolios. This recognition of ownership helps children to make tangible sense of their past learning and their progress (Jones & Shelton, 2006), and to consider future goals. It enables them to capture and contextualise their progress, to reflect on the learning journey and to share dialogue with others.
Children gain enjoyment and a sense of pride when learning is captured and displayed, and their articulation of these experiences is fostered. In this respect a portfolio can act as a portrait of children’s learning journeys over a period of time.

Five-year-old Georgia spoke to her kindergarten teacher, who recorded her thoughts:

“You know I really enjoy looking at my portfolio, not just because it’s about me, but because it helps me to see what I can do. I also like to see pictures of myself working and things that I’ve made. What I do like is that my teacher lets me choose things to put in my portfolio. The other thing that’s good is that I also get to take it home whenever I want to share it with my mum, dad and brother. Sometimes Mum even writes things to put in it, and I like that because then my teacher and my friends get to know about some of the things I do at home but not at kindy. We have time to share information in our portfolios during the week at circle time and I sometimes talk about what Mum writes in mine, and that’s nice.”

‘The open-ended nature of a portfolio or journal, along with the use of visuals and everyday language, encourages three-way communication between staff, families and children.’—Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer

In viewing portfolios as a sharing of information, the development of learning communities is fostered. ‘The open-ended nature of a portfolio or journal, along with the use of visuals and everyday language, encourages three-way communication between staff, families and children’ (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett & Farmer, 2008, p. 64). As Hughes and MacNaughton (2002) state, rich partnerships between the home and early childhood centres encourage family members to have a voice in the promotion of shared meanings. From this perspective a portfolio may be considered a work in progress where children are encouraged to be involved in the collation, storage and documentation of their growth and learning.

Portfolios for young children can act as an interface between making learning visible and promoting the joy of learning, as well as interactions with peers, teachers and family members which can lead to rich conversations. Portfolios can also foster teachers’ ongoing reflection and dialogue, and they help teachers to negotiate future planning with the children.

Spaggiari (1997) emphasises how practitioners need to appreciate the unheard voice of children and that documentation should be encouraged. ‘The traces that children leave us of their lives and thoughts cannot be enclosed in words alone, but need something more: images, drawings, writings and above all narratives’ (p. 10). This is another reason for promoting the construction of portfolios for children.
Portfolios enable early childhood practitioners to:

- define/articulate their work within a specific context and what they draw on to inform their work (i.e. values and beliefs, theoretical perspectives, personal philosophy, ethical codes, standards, principles)
- maintain records of professional practice while showing growth and development over time for all involved (practitioner, children, staff)
- integrate all aspects of their practice
- acknowledge others’ voices
- become self-aware through reflection
- encourage professional dialogue
- feel empowered by analysing and critiquing their own practice.

The process of developing a portfolio is just as important as the product. Ongoing revision of the portfolio represents continued self-assessment leading to further reflection. Suzana, an experienced early childhood professional, says, ‘There is so much that can be seen and discussed from a couple of pages of a portfolio.’ It allows for revisiting, distilling and revising thoughts, ideas, knowledge, skills and experiences in the context of one’s philosophy and daily practice.

The process of developing a portfolio is just as important as the product. Ongoing revision of the portfolio represents continued self-assessment leading to further reflection.
When compiling a portfolio it is often valuable to discuss with others the process and what you are considering to include.

Documenting your professional journey generates enthusiasm. ‘Many practitioners become enthusiastic about portfolios when they realise their potential to create something unique about them and how they work’ (Pearce, 2003, p. 36). It is a way of providing a more informed view of you as a professional and the context in which you are working.

If you are passionate about your portfolios they can become inspirational for yourself, colleagues and students training in the field. I feel almost like I am an artist here and this is my art ... so it just doesn’t belong to work but it belongs to you as well (Suzana).

According to Garman and Piantanida (1991, p. 3), ‘It is the individual’s ability to reflect on the meaning of the contents and to articulate those meanings to others that gives the portfolio its vitality.’ Guidelines for developing portfolios are not prescriptive, and the very act of choosing what to include and how to organise it is useful, because it encourages reflection on practice.

When compiling a portfolio it is often valuable to discuss with others the process and what you are considering to include. Draw from their feedback and act on it. It is also worth considering the format you choose for your portfolio. While most practitioners use a hard copy portfolio set up in a display book, scrapbook, folder, or art display portfolio, the latest move by some is to develop an electronic portfolio. Electronic portfolios have an advantage over the traditional portfolio in that they enable a wide variety of artefacts to be included. You can use sound, tables and graphs, text, graphics, photographs, video clips, voice recordings, scanned children’s work, and links to websites. They take up minimal storage space, are easy to add to, and are able to be backed up.
Many practitioners keep a number of different types of portfolios. These could include:

- a program portfolio
- a project portfolio
- children’s portfolios
- a professional portfolio.

A program portfolio

This type of portfolio captures the learning and development journey of all who are involved in the program. It documents ‘evidence’ in the form of representing the voices of staff, children and community, visually and in writing.

This type of portfolio is able to chart your growth and, through reflection, you are able to view your practice from multiple perspectives and make connections to your philosophy. The following example demonstrates how Jeni makes use of portfolios to not only document her program but also as a tool for improving her practice. Portfolios, for Jenni, provide her with an opportunity to reflect back on reoccurring dilemmas to identify ways forward.

Anything we do throughout the course of the year gets documented. I begin with a subheading and date and a little blurb about the experience which I analyse and critically reflect on and often come back and revisit for my own personal growth. I add photographs to further illustrate the experience. What I attempt to do is represent a very short glimpse of how things which emerge through a day in the room are incorporated into different aspects of the curriculum. This is why I like to offer parents a descriptive blurb so what a child may go home and talk about makes sense to the parents. As projects unfold so too do journeys for us. It is all about growing together and generating ideas together and putting them down on paper and being really excited about sharing them.

This type of portfolio is able to chart your growth and, through reflection, you are able to view your practice from multiple perspectives and make connections to your philosophy.
Suzana says:

For me, this portfolio merges all the other documents and details what actually happens in any given week. This is documented through words, children's sayings, their ideas, accompanied by lots of photographs and images of their art work. It is the whole essence of what is happening.

Josette, another experienced early childhood practitioner, outlines her portfolio as follows:

In my program portfolio I include lots of the children’s conversations to reflect on and to take back to the children for them to discuss further. It is written more as a narrative so that it is meaningful and very relevant to what the children are currently doing in the program. When I first began, I asked myself ‘How am I going to document?’ I decided on a path for myself which included listening to the children and documenting their thoughts through conversations, their symbolic languages and photographs of them engaged in various activities. I also tend to put quotes from books I have read for parents to read to see where my thinking is at; however, I am conscious of creating some sort of flow so others can follow it. I started putting down specific experiences in the room, so it was easier to read but still with a focus on other aspects like different thinking styles. I then keep returning to this document to make sense out of it.

A project portfolio

Project portfolios document projects undertaken by small groups or the whole group of children. One early childhood practitioner explains the process as follows:

In setting out this portfolio I always offer parents a little introduction—basically the engagement of the process and how it came about. I always have an analysis and a critical reflection and a conclusion. Photographs help illustrate children’s involvement. These project books sit alongside my program portfolio.

Another practitioner describes the process she undertakes:

I keep portfolios on different projects, especially long-term projects. These are collections of work, discussion, reflections, lots of poetry and metaphorical thinking. These act as a point of exchange with the parents. They are also used as a resource for further project development by sharing previous projects with the current children, demonstrating the passage of time and the respect shown for these precious moments in children’s lives.
A professional portfolio

This type of portfolio is ‘a collection of individual material that provides proof of personal growth, continuing professional development, life-long learning and competence’ (Pearce, 2003, p. 4) and is usually used in professional development, demonstration of competencies or in job interviews. It allows you to demonstrate your practical knowledge and skills as well as your theoretical knowledge. It includes concrete examples of your knowledge and experience, bringing into focus a clear picture of you as a growing, changing (dynamic) professional. ‘It represents who you are, what you do, why you do it, where you have been, where you are, where you want to go, and how you plan on getting there’ (Evans, 1995, cited in Costantino & De Lorenzo, 2002, p. 11).

‘This type of portfolio is “a collection of individual material that provides proof of personal growth, continuing professional development, life-long learning and competence”’.

—Pearce
In a professional portfolio the following is usually included:

- A professional resume—personal details, qualifications, career aspirations, relevant experience, other relevant skills/knowledge/experience, referees.
- A letter of introduction—your philosophy of working with children, your strengths and goals for continued growth, your ability to work effectively with others.
- Evidence which demonstrates your ability as a practitioner.

Pearce (2003) notes that a good portfolio is futuristic as it shows your future intentions regarding further development.

Anna compiled her first portfolio to use when attending job interviews. Later she tailored it for professional registration requirements. It became a good ‘prop’ for her to use in job interviews as it was ‘something in front of me during the interview which I could refer to’. Now when Anna revisits her professional portfolio she uses it as a point of reflection to chart personal and professional growth. At the end of her training, Anna compiled a portfolio to showcase her understandings and arranged her artefacts and information around the following criteria:

- key selection criteria for the job position
- philosophy statement
- learning statement
- specific areas of focus in working with children (literacy, numeracy, techniques for managing behaviour)
- evidence of planning
- reflection of values held by the organisation advertising the position.

‘It represents who you are, what you do, why you do it, where you have been, where you are, where you want to go, and how you plan on getting there.’

—Evans, 1995, cited in Costantino & De Lorenzo
Also included were what Anna described as ‘buzz’ words which provided a quick snapshot of assembled artefacts/materials in relation to her beliefs and values, and the theory that informed her practice. For example, in the section titled ‘About me’, the following words were listed down one side of the page: ‘friendly, caring, flexible, organised, sensitive, fast learner, positive, passionate, team player, enthusiastic, approachable’. Another example was the section relating to the environment where ‘buzz’ words were listed under three sub-headings about how the environment felt, looked and sounded.

Anna uses lots of photographs (permission granted from parents/other staff), noting ‘a photo is worth 1000 words’. However, it is not enough to just add photographs devoid of context, therefore Anna suggests adding brief statements relating to what is taking place the photographs and why this is important to your work and that of the people in the photographs. This allows you to link your beliefs, values, skills and knowledge, and provide evidence which is meaningful, relevant, has a genuine purpose and adds to your story.
Conclusion

The journey continues

It is important to understand that portfolios will change in relation to the purpose and nature of a journey. The way you use portfolios in your work may evolve over time as you become more proficient at reflection and more specific about using this method of documenting not only the journey of the children you work with, but also your own teaching and learning journey. Why not begin your journey now?
References


