

YOUR INTERVIEWING PORTFOLIO

A portfolio is a collection of well-organized materials which supports your claim to be an outstanding teacher. While a credential file is a collection of material written by others about you, a portfolio allows you to gather and organize material you have developed such as lesson plans, assignments, and tests, classroom ideas and activities, and correspondence with parents. You may also want to include examples of your students' work and pictures, which help to capture the atmosphere of your room, creativity of your bulletin boards, and the effectiveness of your lessons. You may include your credential file as part of your portfolio.

Display your portfolio in a three-ring notebook a binder that zips. Never punch holes in important papers; use plastic sleeves to hold your materials. Do not throw your portfolio together in one night. Start on it a little at a time.

Purposes of your portfolio

There are two good reasons for developing your portfolio (other than it may be an assignment you are required to complete).

#1 - It will force you to reflect on your teaching objectives, goals, accomplishments, and skills. You need to do a thorough self-assessment in order to assemble an effective portfolio, which communicates to others what you have to offer as a teacher. This is excellent preparation for an interview. Your portfolio captures the highlights of what you offer as a teacher. You'll need to edit carefully because you will not be able to include everything that you have accomplished or created.

#2 - In an interview, your portfolio provides visual support for your answers to questions or it may serve as an introduction of you to the interviewer(s). You may not even show your portfolio to anyone during an interview, but be aware of opportunities to do so. For example, you may be asked a question about a topic addressed in your portfolio. In that case, you may respond, "I have a section of my portfolio I'd like to show you as I answer this question. Would you like to see this?"

Some school administrators consider the portfolio an important part of the interview; others don't. You need to be proactive with your portfolio, but this doesn't mean thrusting it into the interviewer's face with a demand of, "Look at this!" Ask interviewers initially if they would like to examine your portfolio during the interview. This gives them the opportunity to respond and to decide if they would like to see it first, last, or not at all. Do not get offended if an interviewer does not want to examine your portfolio during the interview process.

Three guidelines for creating your portfolio

There is no one right way to construct a portfolio, but here are three guidelines to consider when making yours:

1) **Portable.** Keep detailed files and resources at home -- your portfolio must be portable so you may carry it comfortably to interviews and job fairs. Few people will want to look at a **HUGE** notebook stuffed with overwhelming amounts of information. Select your highlights and keep your portfolio to a manageable size. (Sorry, can't give you a specific page length -- you are capable of making that call.)

2) **Organized.** You must be able to retrieve information quickly from your portfolio. Make sure you know where everything is and how to get to it. Use tabs, paper clips, or another system to find particular areas right away.

3) "**Glanceable**". Readers must be able to glance at your portfolio and learn something positive about you. Rarely will someone *read* your portfolio. Just like with a resume, most people will *glance* at it and then determine whether it is worth looking at more carefully. Make your portfolio visually appealing and content rich to match your personality. However, keep your portfolio professional. This does not necessarily mean stuffy, but it does mean neat and organized.

Capture someone's attention

When you skim a magazine or newspaper, what captures your attention and leads you to read an article? Compare a magazine to a textbook. Which one do you prefer to read?

Headlines, color, pictures, charts, and captions attract our attention before a long paragraph of text will. Use headlines or bullet statements to summarize your topic; use pictures, charts, and captions to illustrate your accomplishments; and finally use text to provide more information for interviewers and you. Always have captions or labels explaining each picture. You may tuck the text sections inside of the plastic portfolio sleeves and pull them out when needed or have text follow your attention-grabbing headlines and pictures.

For example, if you wish to convey your philosophy of education, provide a page which boldly headlines your three or four beliefs constituting your philosophy. You may have some supporting bullet statements under each headline. Try to provide some pictures of you or your class which illustrates your philosophy. Lastly, provide your philosophy in more detail or have this in the sleeve under your headline page. Few people will want to read a two or three page paper about your philosophy of education, but they will want to know more about you, which you may capture in a philosophy headline page.

Organizing your portfolio

Start with your teaching experiences: pictures of your room, bulletin boards, and students working. Provide meaningful headlines and captions explaining these pictures and examples. Organize your colorful visual aids to prove an educational point. Pictures may show cooperative learning at work while your headlines and captions explain what material was being learned. Your pictures may prove that your bulletin boards are colorful, educational, and interactive. Examples of student work (protect confidentiality) may show how your students responded to you. For those individuals who work with special education students confidentiality is an important issue. Make sure you have acquired permission from your supervisors and principals before taking pictures to submit in your portfolio. Include materials which show how you evaluate student work.

Put sections that are dominated by text (reference letters for example), toward the end of your portfolio. They are still easily accessible because your portfolio is portable and organized, but they aren't needed at the beginning. For your reference letters, provide a summary page which includes a few quotations taken from these letters. This summary page may entice readers to examine the reference letters in more detail.

Are you thinking of including certificates that you received from participating in organizations in your portfolio? There's nothing wrong with these, but do you have a good purpose for doing so? Are they taking space away from your teaching accomplishments? You make that decision.

Videos, CD's, and Web Sites

You may want to video a lesson and have that tape or CD available for interviewers to see your ability. However, few interviewers will have time to view a lesson. If you do have a

videotape or CD of you teaching, use it as a tool to critique your performance. Edit it to capture the highlights of your lesson in case an administrator wants to see it. Just like a portfolio, you may never show your tape or CD to an interviewer, but if you can verbalize what you have learned from viewing a video of you teaching, then it is worth the effort to tape and critique your teaching.

If you have developed an electronic portfolio or a web page that showcases your teaching potential, let administrators know this is available. More important, be able to describe what this electronic portfolio or web site demonstrates about your teaching skills.

Be creative and have fun!

Your portfolio is a showcase of your best stuff. Let your creative ideas flow and have some fun putting it together. Keep it updated and show them (and you) that you are an outstanding teacher!