Portfolios and Student Testing

Program Puzzler

A student has been attending class regularly and has accumulated a lot of work in her portfolio. You have encouraged her to take some papers home and only keep the best ones in her folder. She has asked you why she is supposed to keep this portfolio when she is going to be retested anyway. How do you respond?

Peer Perspective

For Students

−   Create a process for explaining the portfolio to students.

  o   Use a conference period during orientation to begin explaining the portfolio process.

  o   Talk through all the assessments including the portfolio before beginning instruction.

  o   Repeat and reinforce the portfolio process and its value throughout the student's experience in your program, explaining that it provides information on what has been learned and what still needs to be learned.

  o   Use the portfolio daily.

    ♦   Create the expectation that the students pick up their portfolios as soon as they enter the class each day.

    ♦   Reinforce that student access to the portfolio equals student ownership. The portfolio can be used to reinforce achievements over time and helps to show work accomplished. Students see smaller, quicker steps toward goal achievement.

  o   Explain the portfolio as a living document that will help to inform both the teacher and the student as the learning and instruction happen in the classroom.

  o   Review portfolio documents and discuss progress toward goals regularly.

Timely Tips

Establish a monthly informal goal review and portfolio "clean out" (e.g., time to purge the portfolio and retain only those pieces that inform the learning process.)

Use this time to set new goals or revise the timeline for goals that were not met.

Peer Perspective

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For Staff

– Create your program's internal process for the portfolio and build awareness for staff. This is especially helpful when there is a substitute in the classroom or a student returns to the class after some time away. The portfolio:

  o   Needs to be in place during orientation so that students and staff understand its function.

  o   Is a process between the student and the teacher. The program needs to determine the extent of individual and group activities associated with the portfolio.

  o   Helps teachers and students keep up with the learning process.

  o   Provides understanding of the testing process and results.

  o   Provides information for retesting.

  o   Helps to create targets for understanding. When the student scores low on a test and the teacher knows this is not reflective of the student's skills, the portfolio can be used to determine next steps with teaching.

Added Insights

Much has been written about the necessity of a comprehensive assessment policy (including formal and informal assessments) for diagnosing and placing students initially and as they progress in reaching goals and determining their achievement at a later point in their education.

– Refer to *The Ohio Performance Accountability System (OPAS) Manual* (August 2009) on the Ohio Board of Regents (OBR) ABLE website (http://uso.edu/network/workforce/able/reference/accountability/OPAS_Manual.pdf) for specific information about Ohio's portfolio system.

Literature mentioned in the Added Insights of this document is drawn from reviews, reports, and papers housed on the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) website. Refer to http://www.ncsall.net/index.php?id=15 for more information.