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**KINDERGARTEN AND PORTFOLIOS:
MOVING BEYOND SIMPLY SHOWCASING WORK**

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ABSTRACT

This research study investigated the question, “What are the observed and reported experiences when portfolios are implemented in the Kindergarten classroom?” The participants were 25 five and six year olds in a full-day Kindergarten classroom.

Each student created a literacy portfolio that included 19 documents. Each document was talked about and reflected on before being placed in the portfolio folder. Students participated in small and large group discussions regarding their portfolio documents. Midway through and at the end of the research study, students had a conference with the teacher about their portfolios. Students also completed a survey at the end of the study.

Major results of this study showed an increase in reflective thinking and accurate assessment of work by students. It became evident that students of this age group were capable of reflecting upon their own work but needed teacher modeling, practice, and prompting to do so.

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RESEARCHER STANCE

I first learned about portfolios in one of my methods classes during my graduate work at Moravian College. While exploring various methods of assessment, portfolios were one of the topics we read about. I was intrigued by the idea of having students create portfolios because of the many benefits written in the literature that I read about them. Each year I have trouble impressing upon my students the importance of doing quality work. They seem to quickly forget any assignment, project, or topic we have previously completed almost as soon as it is done. Also, my students crave my evaluation and approval of their work. When I ask them how they think they have done, they usually say, “I don’t know” or “Good.” After reading about portfolios, I conjectured that they seemed the solution to at least some of the problems that I was experiencing in my classroom. However, that did not mean that I immediately jumped on board with the idea of my students creating portfolios.

My students are very young, and I often find myself with certain ideas of what they can and cannot do. I hear and read about various method of instruction that I find intriguing and just as quickly disregard them because “I teach kindergarten.” This had become my mantra all through my graduate classes. “My students cannot do that.” I can recall so many occasions where I thought, “That sounds really neat. But I cannot do that in kindergarten.” I had a list of excuses ready in my mind that I would pull out as necessary:

-My students cannot write.

-They are too young.

-I do not have enough time because just going to the bathroom takes 30 minutes.

-Their attention spans are too short.

Then along came the idea of portfolios. I loved the idea, but still was not convinced I could accomplish that in my Kindergarten class. “My students are not capable of doing that. Besides, what would I put in them anyway?” It finally hit me. If I decided my students could be successful, they would be. I could teach them how! I admired Paley (1993, 2001) after reading two of her books about the informal research she conducted in her Kindergarten classroom. I was impressed by her students’ depth of reflection and their ability to have an “adult” discussion. Then I realized that she taught them how to be that way. She inspired them to interact with each other in a mature way and treated them as fully capable human beings. If she could do it, so could I in my own small way in my own classroom. Instead of believing they cannot, I believe they can.

I also decided to put my faith in myself. I think at heart I am a Kindergarten student, too, and just as I have little faith at times in my students, I experience the lack of faith in myself. Having my students create portfolios meant letting go of my fear of trying something new. It meant allowing myself to start on a “big” project and not be able to control the outcome. I might be a

miserable failure, and everyone who would read my thesis paper would know that! For the time being, I had to push that all away and decide to take a chance. Using portfolios in my classroom might turn out to be a big success and fill the holes of issues that I have experienced in my classroom for years. It might help my students to see the importance of quality work as they look over the documents in their portfolios. It might aid my students in remembering what we have done earlier in the year because their previous work would be included in the portfolio. It might give my students an opportunity to assess their own work instead of relying solely on me to tell them how they have performed. I certainly had high hopes for implementing portfolios in my classroom!

All of this led me to my research question: What are the observed and reported experiences when Kindergarten students create portfolios?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In understanding portfolios, the topics of Kindergarten, reflection, and portfolios need to be addressed. In investigating these topics, one can begin to understand the impact that portfolios have on students and their higher level thinking skills, including reflecting on their own work. These are skills that students will use, not only at the Kindergarten level, but also throughout their lives.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten is a very unique environment. For most students, this is their first formal schooling experience. This makes Kindergarten a challenging situation. Things that are simple and routine in other grade levels cannot be taken for granted in Kindergarten. When students enter the classroom, they may not know how to form a single-file, straight line, or raise their hand when they want to talk. As a result, a large portion of Kindergarten is spent teaching students how to follow the rules and routines of the classroom. Students must first master these things before academic learning can occur. Wortham, Barbour, and Desjean-Perrotta (1998) write, "Children are active learners who construct their own understanding through interaction with concepts and information" (p. 7).

Description of Kindergarten Students

The majority of Kindergarten students are ages five and six. They are very young. Many students have never had to concentrate on something for an extended period of time. Students are on “different levels on the developmental continuum” because of their varying background experiences (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998, p. 30). It is important that students are taught at the level that they are on and that the learning process be student centered (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). Therefore, it is important to get to know each child and his/her prior experiences. Understanding the students allows teachers to make good choices regarding their development (Holmes & Morrison, 1995). “Children benefit from different levels of learning experiences that meet their developmental levels, interests, and learning styles” (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998, p. 46).

Changing activities is helpful to keep students engaged with the material. Teachers should concentrate on the children’s interests to help keep them focused on their work (Nicoll, 1996). This strengthens their self-esteem and allows them to create their own self-knowledge (Kankaanranta, 1996). Most students in the Kindergarten classroom are beginning writers. Therefore, it is important to rely on students’ oral descriptions and explanations of what they have accomplished (Kankaanranta, 1996).

Because of the young age of the students, the teacher's role in the classroom becomes even more central than in other grade levels (Kankaanranta, 1996). Therefore, modeling by the teacher is extremely important. As Kankaanranta (1996) found in her classroom, the students constantly wanted to show their work to her as the teacher, seek her approval, and show how they had grown.

Because Kindergarten is the first exposure to the elementary school setting, it has the possibility to set the tone for their remaining elementary years. If students are taught to take responsibility for their work and assess their own work at an early age, they will carry those skills with them (Branch, Grafelman, & Hurelbrink, 1998). Using collaborative assessment is something that can be started in Kindergarten and used throughout a student's schooling (Branch et al., 1998).

Developmentally Appropriate Tasks

Becoming a critical thinker begins at an early age (Nicoll, 1996). Although children are largely unaware that they are learning to think critically at young ages, they can begin to develop these skills if teachers teach them using developmentally appropriate techniques (Nicoll, 1996). "Each child's development and learning strengths must be considered in order to facilitate learning and ensure individual success" (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998, p. 47). Nicoll (1996) believes that students in Kindergarten through third

grade are not too young to be taught higher level thinking skills. She writes that teachers simply need to understand the “skills and dispositions (attitudes) of critical thinkers, and be able to promote a classroom climate which develops such cognitive skills” (p. 2). Using standardized tests to assess young children can be frustrating for both students and teacher and is an inappropriate way to assess their learning (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). Assessments that are developmentally appropriate for young students are ones that are related to developmental milestones (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). One main way to assess young children is through observation and interview (Holmes & Morrison, 1995).

Developing the necessary critical thinking skills requires a certain degree of autonomy (Nicoll, 1996). In five to eight year olds, this includes a sense of wonder, curiosity, and ability to make choices (Nicoll, 1996). Nicoll believes that at these ages, autonomy and curiosity grow and lead the way for new thinking skills to develop. “What children learn as well as how they learn influences their ultimate ability to think critically” (Nicoll, 1996, p. 2). Children that have these skills fostered at a young age turn into adults who are able to become critical thinkers (Nicoll, 1996).

Although five to eight year olds will not be able to master all of the facets of critical thinking, they show readiness skills for being able to organize objects and ideas and give reasons for their actions—two skills essential to critical

thinkers (Nicoll, 1996). Branch et al. (1998) also believe that primary age students are able to reflect on what they have done and why. Wortham et al. (1998) believe that young children are capable of being responsible for their own learning. Observation is something that many primary teachers do often as a way of assessing their students. Observation is an assessment strategy that fits the “developmental levels of young children” (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998, p. 10).

Self-evaluation is an idea that is quite abstract for young children (Mills, 1994). However, Mills (1994) writes that as soon as children are able to form an opinion, they are able to make limited judgments. Being involved in reflection and self-assessment at an early age allows students to develop self-knowledge (Kankaanranta, 1996). At any age level, students are able to reflect on their learning and make judgments about their work (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). Nicoll (1996) writes about young children, “Their thinking must be encouraged and enriched in order that it may improve” (p. 5). Asking questions and finding ways to answer them, making decisions, and evaluating their answers are developmentally appropriate ways for children to practice these thinking skills (Nicoll, 1996).

Portfolios

A portfolio is like a student’s self-portrait (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). The story tells of the effort and achievement of each student

(Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). Portfolios give opinions held by the student and the facts to back up that opinion by proving what they know by showing samples of their work (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). The student constructs meaning and shows how he has changed by what is compiled in the portfolio (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). It documents performance and growth over time (Diffily & Fleege, 1992; Holmes & Morrison, 1995) and can demonstrate a child's personal learning goals in the context of his or her own reflections and learning (Kankaanranta, 1996). Portfolios showcase student's accomplishments (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998).

Portfolio Contents

“Students should be able to put anything into their portfolios as long as it helps them tell the personal story” (Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p. 1). Each student's portfolio will be different (Diffily & Fleege, 1992) because they each tell a different story of learning and of what students know (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). “The contents are examples of how the student performed in demonstrating the application of knowledge” (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998, p. 8). Many samples of student work are included in the portfolio to show an in-depth look at student skills (Diffily & Fleege, 1992; Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). The portfolio provides a look at student knowledge from many different viewpoints (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). “Portfolios provided an opportunity for students and researchers to see weekly growth and

improvement” (Anderson, Mallo, Nee, & Wear, 2003, p. 50). A portfolio is a chronicle of change instead of a one-time look at limited skills at one point in time (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). It should give a balanced look at student skills and accomplishments (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998).

Portfolios show “evidence of student performance, application and transfer of knowledge, as well as student persistence and creativity” (Boersma, Brahmstedt, Bruyn, & Clausing, 1995, p. 38). Products in the portfolio can be used to form a “total judgment” about what a student needs to continue to grow as a learner (Mills, 1994, p. 2). Paulson and Paulson (1991) feel that a portfolio is not a place for teachers to document what a student does not know, while Burke (1999) writes that the final portfolio should contain pieces that show both strengths and weaknesses of the student to give a clear picture of that student’s knowledge. “The contents of the portfolios reflect children’s everyday life and the learning and growth process” (Kankaanranta, 1996, p. 141). Gagliano and Swiatek (1999) believe that one asset of portfolio assessment is its continuous and cumulative nature that allows teachers to see the learning style of each student.

Portfolios are not just folders of work (Burke, 1999; Seiter, 1995). Folders usually include all of the work a student has done and are not interacted with (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). Portfolios contain work that is purposefully selected to show effort or progress or learning (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). They

include reflection on the work that has been done. Ryan (1994) found that some teachers still treated portfolios as collections of assigned worksheets. He believes that students need to have a choice of what documents to include in their portfolio (Ryan, 1994).

“A portfolio is an organized collection of student work and self-reflection,” write Anderson, Mallo, Nee, & Wear (2003, p. 21). Kankaanranta (1996) believes that selecting work to put in a folder is not enough to constitute a portfolio. She asserts that portfolios must include reflections, summaries of the activities, and self-assessments. Hearne and Schuman (1992) agree. They believe that students must be involved with the selection of documents to include in the portfolio and that evidence of reflection about the work must be present.

Students should be involved in choosing the pieces included in the portfolio so that students feel they have ownership of their portfolio and the contents (Boersma et al., 1995; Branch et al., 1998; Burke, 1999; Paulson & Paulson, 1991; Popham, 2005). Both students and teacher should choose documents to include in the portfolio that will later be reflected upon (Anderson, Mallo, Nee, & Wear, 2003). Students need to view portfolios as their own, not just folders to hold work that the teacher will grade (Popham, 2005). One way that students develop ownership of their work with portfolios is through self-evaluation (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). As students keep their portfolio, they assess their work and see their own progress (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). The

portfolio shows what a student can do and outlines their progress over a long period of time in various areas (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). “The purpose of the portfolio. . . is a story. . . told from the student’s perspective” (Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p. 2).

In choosing the pieces to include in the portfolio, the student also chooses pieces that will be assessed by the teacher (Wolfe, 1996). “Students who are involved in the selection and/or compilation process are empowered to become independent learners, problem solvers, and creators of new understandings” (Branch et al., 1998, p. 24). Burke (1999) believes that just the act of choosing which pieces to include in the portfolio will help students to build their metacognitive skills. Giving students the right to choose their own work for inclusion in the portfolio will give students a sense of personal accomplishment (Branch et al., 1998). The student is the author, and the teacher acts as publisher (Paulson & Paulson, 1991).

Portfolios give students control of their own learning (Wolfe, 1996). Although it is optimal to have a variety of work in a portfolio, the work chosen for the portfolio should show some skill or knowledge and allow others who view the portfolio to know how well the student has mastered that skill (Popham, 2005). Burke (1999) believes that portfolios should show different ways of learning that use the multiple intelligences. Popham (2005) writes, “Portfolios

have the potential to create authentic portraits of what students learn” (p. 217).

Portfolio Organization

Every portfolio should have a purpose and a focus (Burke, 1999). Paulson and Paulson (1991) believe that the student should select this purpose. The purpose will help all who view the portfolio understand the contents (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). Writing a self-reflective cover letter can help explain to the person who views the portfolio what the purpose is and what skills have been mastered as shown by the documents in the portfolio (Wolfe, 1996).

The arrangement of the documents in the portfolio will vary according to purpose (Popham, 2005). The organization of the portfolio should depend on the age of the students and the type of the portfolio (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). Popham (2005) describes several purposes a portfolio could take on. Portfolios can be used to document student progress by showing evidence of growth throughout the pieces of work. They can also be used to “showcase student accomplishments” (p. 211). In this type of portfolio, students select only their best work to include and reflect on its quality. Every entry in the portfolio should be dated (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). This will help to organize the documents and aid in chronicling student growth.

Portfolios can be used to evaluate student status. The teacher and student can see if the work has met the quality criteria previously set up. Popham (2005) and Burke (1999) believe that it is only after the purpose of the portfolio is chosen

that students can begin to build the portfolio. The purpose should determine the type of portfolio and the process of how it will be developed (Burke, 1999).

Portfolio Assessment

“Portfolio assessment is the intersection of instruction and evaluation” (Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p. 5). Burke (1999) agrees with Paulson and Paulson (1991). She writes, “The portfolio helps the classroom environment become a seamless web of instruction and assessment” (p. 60). Using portfolio assessment links assessment and instruction where the assessment influences instruction and the instruction influences the assessment (Popham, 2005). Gordon and Julius (1995) report that in their experiences “portfolios can make the whole curriculum come together in an integrated way” (p. 96). Portfolios as an assessment match the evaluation type to the way that many teachers are teaching (Gordon & Julius, 1995). Portfolios give both students and teacher a meaningful measure of growth (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999).

Hall and Hewitt-Gervais (1999) report that over half of the teachers in their study used portfolios to diagnose student weaknesses that they then focused instruction on in their classroom. Hearne and Schuman (1992) believe that teachers can use portfolios as diagnostic tools to bring about improvement in the classroom or the school by using the information gathered to make instructional decisions. Portfolios allow teachers to see growth in individual students, rather than comparing that child to the whole group (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-

Perrotta, 1998). Portfolio use brings instruction and assessment together (Mills, 1994) because it allows for ongoing assessment of students (Seiter, 1995) that measures not only what a student knows but also how he uses what he knows (Mills, 1994).

Holmes and Morrison (1995) believe that assessment should be conducted in a natural environment as students carry out their daily activities. Portfolios “provide a broader and more inclusive means of assessment” (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999, p. 17) because it is an ongoing evaluation that shows development over time (Holmes & Morrison, 1995). Although the final product is important, the process by which the product was created is just as important and tells teachers more about how students learn (Burke, 1999). This emphasis on both process and product shows how the blending of instruction and assessment are vital to understand student growth and knowledge.

Students can participate in the evaluation process through the creation of a portfolio and share their reflections with the teacher who is assessing them (Mills, 1994; Wolfe, 1996). Paulson and Paulson (1991) believe that students need to be involved in designing and implementing self-assessment for their portfolios. Boersma et al. (1995) found that most teachers believe that their students lack the ability to self-assess. Therefore, it becomes important that teachers teach these skills to their students and use authentic assessments that teach students how to take responsibility for their own work. Koelper and Messerges (2003) found at

the end of their study that 100% of students believed that they were able to assess their own work after being taught how to do so.

Having students create portfolios gives them a purpose for assessing and reflecting on their own work, especially if they know others will be viewing their portfolio (Koelper & Messerges, 2003). Popham (2005) writes that most specialists in portfolio assessment agree that the most important skill learned by using portfolios is the “increased abilities of students to evaluate their own work” (p. 218). “The ability to self-assess and monitor one’s own learning is the most important skill that students acquire in school” (Branch et al., 1998). Portfolios can show not only how a student has grown in classroom skills, but also how he/she has grown in the area of self-assessment (Diffily & Fleege, 1992).

Many types of assessment used in the classroom do not allow students to participate in the assessment process, thereby not allowing students to grow in their own evaluation skills (Boersma et al., 1995). Using standardized tests “reduce student ownership and pride in their work” because “students are not involved in assessing and evaluating their own work” (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999, p. 21). When using traditional methods of assessment, the assessment is separate from learning (Koelper & Messerges, 2003). Traditional tests do not show the ongoing progress of students as other authentic assessments do (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). “Standardized tests provide only a limited measure of the students’ abilities” (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999, p. 9). Therefore, portfolios

become powerful tools not only for assessing but also for learning as well because of the feeling of authenticity brought on by being made up of work that is meaningful to the students (Gordon & Julius, 1995). Portfolios are believed to give an accurate and fair measure of what a student can do (Hearne & Schuman, 1992).

Using a rubric to score the portfolio allows students to compare their work to the standards included on the rubric and, in essence, assess their own work (Wolfe, 1996). This helps students take responsibility for their own work (Branch et al., 1998). Popham (2005) writes that criteria for judging the quality of work should be developed with the students so that they are able to evaluate their own work. Students can be involved in the creation of the rubric so that they will “internalize the acceptable standards for quality work” (Branch et al., 1998, p. 39). That way, students will have seen the rubric prior to creating their portfolio and will understand it (Popham, 2005). Rubrics “clarify the expected outcomes for student performance” (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998, p. 75). When the criteria are shared with students before a task is begun, it gives them guidance and provides an opportunity for self-assessment (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998).

Portfolio Conferences

Teachers can help students select pieces, define their purpose, and reflect on their work through conferences (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). “Teachers and

students learn together” this way (Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p. 6). Students take an active role in evaluating their own work and improving their self-evaluation skills during the conference (Popham, 2005). During a portfolio conference, the student takes the responsibility of becoming self-reflective and evaluates his own work (Branch et al., 1998). Both teacher and student evaluate the student’s work (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). It is up to the teacher to be sure that the student has accurately reflected on his own work (Branch et al., 1998). By being able to communicate about what he has done, the student becomes accountable for his performance (Branch et al., 1998).

Teacher-student conferences about a student’s portfolio allow the student to synthesize what has been learned in creating the portfolio and to see how successful he has been through his work (Burke, 1999). Conferences are effective in finding out about students’ learning and can help students make discoveries about their own learning and self-perception (Boersma et al., 1995). During a portfolio conference, the teacher can question a student about his projects and activities (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). This can be either a formal or informal interview with students (Diffily & Fleege, 1992; Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). The portfolio process is one that is flexible enough to allow a teacher to use the structure that is appropriate for his/her students (Diffily & Fleege, 1992).

For Anderson, Mallo, Nee, and Wear (2003), the main objective of the portfolio conference is to guide students to develop reflections about their work. Conferences can also be used to talk to students about their interests and celebrate their accomplishments (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). It can be a valuable opportunity to model self-assessment (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). Conferences are an effective and developmentally appropriate way to assess the work of young students (Diffily & Fleege, 1992).

Reflection

Many teachers would like to increase the higher level thinking skills of their students. Portfolios are direct assessments that use complex cognitive skills, rather than breaking skills into smaller, insignificant parts (Wolfe, 1996). Because of these complex skills, using portfolios as an assessment tool allows students to develop “different types of cognitive skills,” such as reflecting on learning (Wolfe, 1996, p. 4). Gagliano and Swiatek (1999) believe that portfolios “increase students’ metacognition” (p. 40). The portfolio as an assessment tool shows how students are able to use their new knowledge in a meaningful way (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998). Demonstrating growth helps lead to continued learning (Gordon & Julius, 1995). Therefore, having students see their progress will help them reflect on it and lead them to further accomplishments.

Higher Level Thinking Skills

Portfolios can show how well students reflect on their own learning (Wolfe, 1996). Without reflections, the portfolio is merely a superficial collection of work (Ryan, 1994). Wolfe (1996) cautions, however, that the benefits of higher level thinking skills will be achieved maximally by implementing portfolio use on a large scale. Popham (2005) agrees that portfolios need to take center stage in the classroom if teachers want to foster self-evaluation and reflective skills in their students.

“Critical thinkers have both the desire and the ability to think clearly and precisely” (Nicoll, 1996, p. 3). When reflective thinking is used, students evaluate their work and work to make improvements based on what is rational (Seiter, 1995). Portfolios encourage students to become more reflective about their work because of their recursive nature (Anderson, Mallo, Nee, & Wear, 2003). It is important for students to reflect upon their work and their growth to decide what impact it has had on themselves as a person and a learner (Ryan, 1994).

Seiter (1995) reports in his research study that fostering reflective thinking did have a positive impact on increasing higher level thinking skills. Students become decision makers as they become proficient in producing and revising quality work (Gordon & Julius, 1995). They also understand that they are able to go back to revise and reflect on what they have done (Gordon & Julius, 1995).

However, if teachers expect students to develop these higher-level thinking skills, they need to assess students in authentic, real-life ways. Using authentic assessments allow students to better understand what quality work looks like (Hearne & Schuman, 1992). Whereas traditional means of assessment may show recall of facts, they do not show any learning of higher-level thinking skills (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). In fact, many types of traditional tests focus solely on lower-level thinking skills and ignore critical thinking (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999).

As students review their work, not just looking at it once or twice, they begin to develop self-reflection skills (Popham, 2005). Reflection can help students to learn better by being able to evaluate their own work (Popham, 2005). Teaching students about thinking (metacognition) is an important skill that students will use as they become more reflective about their work and more invested in their learning (Burke, 1999). Branch et al. (1998) found that “students who are involved in self-reflection learn to monitor, assess, and improve their performance and their thinking” (p. 22). As students are developing reflections about their work, teachers can look for honest and insightful comments (Anderson, Mallo, Nee, & Wear, 2003). These reflections may even be used to set goals for the student’s academic future (Anderson, Mallo, Nee & Wear, 2003). Portfolio use allows teachers and students to identify problems and set goals together (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). Students grow to see themselves as

learners with strengths and weaknesses and gain insight into their own knowledge, as well as learning to assess their own work (Branch et al., 1998). Students can be taught to integrate their ideas through the reflection they are learning to do (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998).

Students will not be able to reflect on their work until they are taught to do so (Burke, 1999). In their research study, Koelper and Messerges (2003) found that students were not able to communicate their weaknesses and strengths when looking at their own work, even at the end of their intervention period. In contrast, however, they also found that the majority of students believed they were responsible for their own learning. Therefore, teachers need to help bridge the gap and help students learn how to be responsible for assessing their own work. Anderson, Mallo, Nee, and Wear (2003) experienced the same finding. They found that beginning student reflections were missing details and honesty. However, after a few weeks, the researchers found that students were able to become more truthful and were more easily able to identify their mistakes. “Through the use of reflection, students were able to take ownership of their work. By the end of the intervention, all students were able to identify their areas of improvement” (Anderson, Mallo, Nee, & Wear, 2003). Holmes and Morrison (1995) concur. Through the course of their study, they found that students became “better critics of their own work” (p. 6). Ryan (1994) believes that

teachers need to encourage students to reflect on the activities and what they mean to the student.

Teachers can encourage this higher order thinking by teaching strategies to their students that build their reflective skills (Burke, 1999). By teaching students these metacognitive skills, the teacher enables the student to achieve his academic goals (Burke, 1999). It has been found that the first student reflections are very general until these skills are practiced more. Then they become more specific as time goes on (Koelper & Messerges, 2003). Self-assessment skills should be developed early in students because it lays the groundwork for making judgments about themselves and their lives (Mills, 1994). “The portfolios seemed to have a positive effect on making students more aware of their strengths” (Koelper & Messerges, 2003, p. 32).

Developing Maturity

Increasing higher level thinking skills is one way to increase maturity in students. Teachers and other adults can teach maturity to children through modeling in a supportive environment (Nicoll, 1996). Observation, listening, and stating points of view are skills that can be taught to support maturity (Nicoll, 1996). “Through self-assessment the child’s awareness of his or her learning and growth develops” (Kankaanranta, 1996, p. 140). Students can become responsible for their own learning and develop the motivation to become “self-directed learners” as they increase their thinking skills and, thereby, their maturity

level (Gordon & Julius, 1995, p. 96). Using portfolios with students can also increase their self-esteem (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999). This is another way that students can become more mature.

Students who are more mature can handle more responsibility. Hall and Hewitt-Gervais (1999) found that teachers of older students gave their students more responsibility and decision making opportunities than did those of younger students. Having students become accountable for their own work is one way that students can increase their maturity (Diffily & Fleege, 1992). Branch et al. (1998) report that the skill of reflecting on weaknesses takes maturity in students, but that after being taught how to reflect honestly on their work, even younger students are able to make improvements in this skill. This shows that the use of portfolios leads students to become more independent learners (Gagliano & Swiatek, 1999).

As students continue to participate in collaborative assessment and reflection, these skills will be refined over time, and students will become better able to assess their growth (Branch et al., 1998). Younger students tend to assess their abilities to be higher than they really are, but as students mature, they are able to assess themselves more accurately (Boersma, Brahmstedt, Bruyn, & Clausing, 1995). Because self-evaluation is a learned skill, mastery of this may not come until a student reaches a maturity level that will allow full understanding (Boersma et al., 1995). Continued practice is also necessary to fully develop self-

evaluation skills (Boersma et al., 1995), which can lead to a higher quality of work from students.

Quality of Work

Teachers strive to help their students produce high quality work. However, Branch et al. (1998) found that elementary students took little responsibility for the quality of their work, and that students needed to develop skills that would allow them to raise their expectations of themselves, thus raising the overall quality of their work. They write, “Most students will lack the motivation to do quality work” (Branch et al., 1998, p. 20).

Giving students a sense of ownership, helping students to become self-directed instead of relying on the teacher for feedback, and helping students to develop better self-assessment skills will give students the motivation they need to produce higher quality work (Branch et al., 1998). When teachers show students models of high quality work and give students specific criteria for producing high quality work, students learn to meet higher standards for their work (Branch et al., 1998). “The act of keeping and reviewing portfolios emphasizes the value of quality work to children and encourages them to assess their own learning as they look critically at portfolio contents” (Wortham, Barbour, & Desjean-Perrotta, 1998, p. 66).

Many times, students are not taught what makes up quality work (Gordon & Julius, 1995). By determining the specific standards of quality work, students

will grow to be responsible for their learning (Gordon & Julius, 1995). However, this is something that needs to be taught and practiced (Gordon & Julius, 1995). One way of doing this is by having students collaborate and share with their peers. This way, they get a sense of what quality work looks like (Gordon & Julius, 1995).

Developing a rubric to score student work will help students to be aware of the criteria they will need to meet in order to produce quality work and develop an intrinsic sense of what quality work is (Branch et al., 1998). By dating the work included in a portfolio, students and teachers can see the changes in quality that have taken place over time (Popham, 2005). When students are able to go back and look at their work, they will become more successful at finding and fixing mistakes (Koelper & Messerges, 2003). This is a first step for students to evaluate their own work. Viewing work of high quality and seeing improvement can motivate a student to continue to work to do his best.

Remembering Previous Work

Remembering and reflecting on their work allows students to think about their performance over time (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). By reflecting on their work, students get to know what they can do and how well they can do it (Paulson & Paulson, 1991); they think about “what they know and how they know it” in a very personal way (Paulson & Paulson, 1991, p. 3). Students can look at their work and see how they have changed as a learner over time (Paulson & Paulson,

1991). Students can write a narrative to show how their knowledge has changed to accompany their work (Paulson & Paulson, 1991).

Popham (2005) believes that it is particularly helpful for students to compare early work with more recent work in order to develop reflective skills. This self-evaluation is crucial for further growth (Popham, 2005). Boersma et al. (1995) found that primary students have “difficulty accurately recalling previous experiences” (p. 67). Therefore, it becomes momentous that by using portfolios students are able to go back and review work that was already completed and remember the experiences that accompany each piece. In their study, Hall and Hewitt-Gervais (1999) found that the majority of teachers believed that using portfolios with their students has increased their self-reflection skills because students were able to go back and look at their work and their progress through the documents in the portfolios.

Summary

Even young children in Kindergarten are able to develop higher level thinking skills and participate in the portfolio process in a developmentally appropriate way. By involving students in the creation of the portfolio and the selection of the materials to include, students will practice their skills of self-evaluation and judgment. It is especially critical in the primary grades that teachers teach students about quality work and how to assess their own work documents. Younger students learn best by modeling and repetition. Once

teachers show students how to use these skills, students will be able to put them into practice both in and out of the classroom. Reflecting on their work and conferencing with the teacher will allow students to further develop thinking skills that they will continue to use for the rest of their lives.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to show the observed and reported experiences of using portfolios with Kindergarten students. It used deliberate and specific instruction with young students to develop reflections about their work and assess themselves.

Introduction

In my plan to investigate using portfolios in my Kindergarten classroom, I implemented many new procedures and routines. I also used some assignments from the previous year in new ways. I wanted to teach my students how to develop reflective thinking skills by looking back and thinking about previous work in an aim to help my students produce high quality work. Students participated in conferences where they shared their thoughts and feelings about their work and learned to evaluate what they have done.

Setting

My study took place in my Kindergarten classroom in a Kindergarten through Sixth Grade elementary school. My class is part of a full-day Kindergarten program. The school currently has a population of approximately 800 students. The students come from mostly low socio-economic backgrounds, punctuated by small groups of children of upper middle class status. The majority

of students are Caucasian, with only about 7% of students representing various minorities.

The school is an old, outdated, and overcrowded building, with the last renovations taking place in the mid 1970s. The school district began renovations at the start of my research study. The carpets in hallways and classrooms were removed, leaving only the cement sub-flooring. My Kindergarten room is a former music room located in the back of the school, near the noisy cafeteria. It has very little storage, forcing me to invent creative solutions for all of my teaching and student materials.

Participants

The participants of this study were the five and six year olds in my full-day Kindergarten class. My classroom is home to 25 students – 10 of whom are boys and 15 are girls. None of my students participated in Special Education classes, had been identified with learning disabilities, or had IEPs because this was their first experience with formal schooling. Therefore, all of my students stayed in my classroom for the entire day, with the exception of Special Area classes. Every Kindergarten student was assigned to a fifth grade buddy. We met with our fifth grade buddies weekly throughout the school year. When we met with our buddies, we completed projects, writing, and reading books together. I had the help of a half-time Instructional Assistant in my classroom. She split her time between my classroom and that of another Kindergarten teacher. This meant

that I could count on her help for about half of each day. She conducted remediation activities out of the classroom in small groups or one-on-one with those students who needed extra help. She also assisted me with large group activities within the classroom.

Procedures

The first step in the research process was to submit an application to the Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board (HSIRB). The board reviewed my application to ensure the study was to be conducted in an ethical manner and provide adequate safety measures to protect my students. My proposal was accepted before my research began (see Appendix A).

My Kindergarten class participated in this research study beginning on September 1st and ending on January 5th. The class produced 19 documents that formed their Language Arts portfolio. The working schedule was as follows:

Week One – Write first name and draw picture of self (see Appendix B)

- Form the letter Cc with string

Week Two – Draw a picture of family and dictate at least 3 sentences about picture (see Appendix C)

- Draw favorite story character from stories we have read (see Appendix D)

Week Three – Write the alphabet (see Appendix E)

- Journal entry: My favorite part of school is... (see Appendix F)

Week Four – Create the letter Kk using straws

- October writing assessment: I can... (see Appendix G)

Week Five – Write first name (see Appendix H)

- Draw picture and dictate sentences to tell what you would do if you were Lilly from Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes (see Appendix I)
- First portfolio conference

Week Six – Make the letter Qq with glue

- Journal entry: When I look out my window I see... (see Appendix J)

Week Seven – Write letter Ss with glitter

- November writing assessment: I enjoy going to... (see Appendix K)

Week Eight – Journal entry: I like fall because... (see Appendix L)

- Draw beginning, middle, and end of Knuffle Bunny by Mo Willems (see Appendix M)

Week Nine – Write alphabet (see Appendix E)

Week Ten – Write first name (see Appendix H)

- December writing assessment: At night I ... (see Appendix N)

Week Eleven – Put descriptors on chosen pieces

- Place all items in chronological order
- Create decorative cover for portfolio

Week Twelve – Teacher/student conferences

All 19 documents remained in the student portfolios. As pieces were created, students added them to the portfolio after being dated by the teacher. Each Friday, students looked over the work already in their portfolios. As students reviewed the contents, I listened for spontaneous reflective comments and noted them in my field log. I recorded any comments or feelings they had about their work. Portfolios were kept in a common area in the classroom. Although students did not have unlimited access to their portfolios, they were given opportunities throughout the school week to add new items and to browse through old items.

Many different pieces were created and placed in student portfolios. For ten weeks, students placed two works per week in their portfolios. Week 11 was used to organize portfolio materials and label them. The class's fifth grade buddies assisted students in placing the descriptor labels on the portfolio documents. Conferences were held during week 12.

Students participated in one-on-one teacher/student conferences twice throughout the process. During the conference, students had the opportunity to view the contents of their portfolio and explain their thoughts and feelings about their work. Conferences lasted approximately 15 minutes. While I conducted individual conferences, the class participated in recess, quiet time, snack time, independent work activities, and story time activities led by my Instructional Assistant.

The following list of questions and statement were used to prompt students who needed some help expressing their thoughts and feelings during the conference time:

1. How do you feel about this piece? Why?
2. Describe to me how you made this piece. What were you thinking when you made it?
3. What do you like about your work on this piece?
4. What do you not like about your work on this piece?
5. What could you have done differently on this piece?
6. Did you work your hardest on this piece? How do you know?
7. How does this piece compare to others you have done? Why?
8. What other work would you like to include in your portfolio?

During the 12th week, after all documents were in the portfolio, students attached pre-printed descriptors to pieces of their choosing fitting the description (see

Appendix O). I read the descriptors to students. I showed them how to cut each one out after it was colored. We discussed how to choose which description to place on which piece of work, and that some work will not have a label. I told students to think about pieces they feel strongly about. I asked, which one stands out as your favorite? Which work was the hardest for you? When the fifth grade buddies came, students explained their portfolio to their buddy. The fifth graders then glued each label on the document that the Kindergarten student chose.

Students labeled their documents as:

1. My favorite piece
2. My best work
3. Piece I worked the hardest on
4. Piece I would like to do over
5. Piece I would like to show my Mommy or Daddy
6. Piece I am most proud of

The second teacher/student conference lasted approximately 15 minutes. I used the second conference time as an opportunity to interview students about how they felt about the portfolio process and experience. As we looked over the student work in the portfolio, I noticed the labels students put on their work. I asked students to tell me why they chose each piece as it was labeled. I asked students the following questions:

1. What makes this your favorite piece?

2. Why is this your best work?
3. How can you tell you worked hard on this?
4. Why would you like to do this piece over?
5. What could you tell Mom or Dad about this work?
6. Why are you so proud of this work?

As students reflected on their work, I typed their ideas on my computer and printed each question and answer in a large font (see Appendix P). I then added these reflections to the portfolio as a mirror page for each chosen piece. Students were only asked to reflect on the labeled pieces. However, I transcribed any unsolicited reflections that students provided. These reflections were also noted in my field log. Once the conferences were finished and all reflections done, I used a rubric to grade student portfolios (see Appendix Q). After the portfolios were completed, students were asked to complete a short survey telling me what they liked and did not like about the portfolio process (see Appendix R).

Data Sources

Field Log

I used various sources to collect data in my classroom throughout my research study. I used a field log to observe and reflect on what I had seen and heard (see Appendix S). In the field log, I made note of reflective comments that students made that were both solicited and unsolicited. I used the field log to make observations in the classroom about what I see and hear pertaining to both

solicited and unsolicited reflective comments students made. At the end of each day, I wrote reflections based on my observations. I also noted in my field log reflective comments during both teacher/student conferences.

Work Samples

I had many work samples to view in the student portfolios. I looked for quality of completed work, as well as reflective comments made by students to accompany their work.

Rubric

I created a rubric that I used to score student portfolios (see Appendix Q). The rubric helped me to see the effort that students put into their work and the quality of student reflections.

Survey

Students completed a survey after creating their portfolios telling about their experiences throughout the portfolio process (see Appendix R). I used those responses to gather information about student opinions of their work and portfolios.

Class Interviews

Finally, students participated in several class interviews. Each Friday as students browsed through their work in the portfolios, I asked students what they thought about their portfolios and the work they had done so far. I made notes from their responses and also noted any unsolicited comments that I heard.

Students discussed their portfolios in small and large group formats. Students talked to their group about their portfolios and the documents inside.

Data Analysis

Using all of the above noted sources, I analyzed all of the data that I had collected. I used the data to look for reflective comments made by students. I coded my field log, examined the codes, put the codes into bins, and used the bins to develop theme statements. These theme statements showed me what topics recur throughout my field log and pointed me to important information that I had observed in my classroom. I looked at scores based on the rubric I used to grade the student portfolios. I graphed the portfolio scores to see what percentage of students scored as superior, acceptable, or not evident yet. This told me the depth of student reflections and how many students in the class were able to learn to make accurate reflective comments over the months they participated in the portfolio process.

Summary

In this study, students created Language Arts portfolios and developed reflective thinking skills by practicing evaluation of their own work. Students participated in a variety of activities and created many artifacts that were included in their portfolios. I analyzed the data of all students whose parents signed the parental consent form (see Appendix T). I explained my study to my students in my classroom (see Appendix U). This study was conducted as described with

students collecting work, conferencing with the teacher and their peers, completing a survey, and participating in group and individual interviews.

TRUSTWORTHINESS STATEMENT

Ensuring trustworthiness in a research study is of utmost importance. I followed the steps laid out by Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2005) when conducting my own study. I wanted to involve my students in my study. This meant that I explained to them in developmentally appropriate terms what I would be doing and why. Before beginning my study, I obtained consent from my principal and from the parents of my students (see Appendixes V&T). I also explained the parental consent form before I sent it home. My parental consent form followed the guidelines described by Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2005), plus those of the Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board.

At the end of the study, I surveyed all students regarding their attitudes and feelings about their portfolios. Students also had opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings to me throughout the portfolio process during our interviews and conferences. I wanted my students' thoughts and ideas to help guide me through my research process. This way I was ensured that I would be able to present my data from multiple points of view (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2005).

I was certain to maintain confidentiality. All student names were changed to pseudonyms in my research report. I gave each student a private space to complete his/her survey. Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity helped my students to feel that they could share their true feelings and thoughts and build a

sense of trust in the classroom (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2005). I explained to my class that I would be sharing their ideas with my class at Moravian, but that I would not use any of their names. All of the students in my classroom were treated the same and completed the same classroom requirements whether or not their parents had given their consent to participate in my research study (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005). I informed both parents and students that they could withdraw from my study at any time with no penalty. I wanted all of my students and their families to be comfortable with the portfolio process and my gathering data.

As a teacher researcher, I needed to be open to multiple points of view as I gathered and analyzed data. One way that I kept myself open to multiple viewpoints was to state my research question in a neutral form. This allowed me to be open to any experiences that my students and I had in the course of my research study. I did not predict the outcome of my study but opened my classroom to the possibility of anything happening. I was looking for any changes that took place.

Also, by being aware of my own biases, I was able to keep my mind more open. I previously identified that I thought my students were so young and there were many limitations as to what they could do. I put all of that aside during my research project to see what the real outcomes were. That way, I had data to back up whatever conclusions I formed. Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) wrote

that research projects are filtered through what the researcher believes. Having data to back up any research findings allowed me to open those filters and really see what has happened.

I kept a field log of observations from my classroom where I wrote what I saw and heard. I kept my own experiences and reflections separate from my observations so that I was able to determine what was fact and what was my own opinion about what went on in the classroom. As Ely et al. (1997) wrote, “We need to record, name what is being recorded, and construct meaning from . . . the data” (p. 37).

“As researchers we bring multiple stances to our studies” (Ely et al., 1997, p. 38). In order to understand these multiple points of view, I was sure to monitor myself so that I could be assured that I have heard from all participants in my study. One way that I did this was by using a spreadsheet with all of my student names on it. I wrote the student comments after their names. Also, all students participated in a conference with me where I again recorded their thoughts about their portfolios and the portfolio process. Lastly, I had all students complete a survey about their feelings surrounding the portfolio process.

Keeping multiple sources of data was another way to ensure that I would be open to multiple points of view. I used my observations and reflections from my field log, interviews and conferences with students, student surveys, and student work as data in my study. Ely et al. (1997) called this “triangulation” of

data. This helped to ensure that results were more valid by collecting data from various sources.

I continued to be self-reflective throughout the study (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, 2005). This meant that my daily field log contained observer's comments and reflections as well as straight observation. I kept the observational data separate from my reflections as a way to control my biases of what was happening in the classroom. I reviewed my data several times before coming to any conclusions. By coding my field log as I gathered the data, I was able to see emerging themes and allowed those themes to guide my study. I was open to any experiences or changes as a result of my research study. It is my hope that all of those steps earned me the title of "trustworthy researcher."

MY STORY

Beginnings

Each new school year for me begins with a sense of excitement and a sense of trepidation. Kindergarten is so difficult in the beginning of the year. My students have had no formal experiences with classroom routines, so the first few weeks of school are very noisy and very hectic! I know nothing about my students when they come through my classroom door because this is the first time they have been in school. Unlike in other grades, I have no last year's teacher to give me tips on how to deal with each unique personality.

The beginning of this year brought with it a new sense of nervousness and fear of the unknown because not only would I soon be meeting a whole new group of students, but also because I was about to embark on a huge research project. I just kept thinking that I wished I were conducting my research study in the second half of the year when my students would be older and more experienced in the ways of Kindergarten. I decided my only choice was to put all of those thoughts behind me and forge ahead bravely. I began to plan my curriculum and activities for the beginning of the year knowing I would soon get to know a new group of students.

Presenting Portfolios

I was very excited to present my portfolio project to my students. Here we were, at only the second day of Kindergarten, and I was introducing them to this

huge, complicated project. I had high expectations for the work we would do together this semester. My excitement must have been evident to my students because many of them got excited about the possibility of participating in this great big project. A few of the students listened with big smiles on their faces. Marvin, who I could tell would be one of my most difficult students, started moving his body in circle and chanting, “Portfolios, portfolios, portfolios . . .” until I had to ask him to stop. It was the first time that everyone in my class sat and listened quietly.

I really could not believe it! It certainly was a wonderful way to begin my research project. Later that day, students created the first document to place in their portfolios. Students drew a picture of themselves and wrote their first names. They then placed the paper in their portfolio folder that I had made by stapling two large pieces of cardstock together. I had written students’ names on the front, but they decorated the front and back cover any way they wanted to. I felt relieved that the project was up and running. I truly felt as if I had a road map in front of me for our Kindergarten year. I knew that if I stayed on schedule that I could accomplish everything that I wanted to. I was not scared anymore because I knew I had done enough planning to see me through this first semester.

I had one thing that was holding everything together – this idea of creating portfolios. I knew that no matter what else happened, I had to continue forward with that project. It really helped me to feel more confident in my classroom,

even in the face of the unknown. I knew what to do in my classroom, even when faced with these 25 strangers, because I had everything all laid out and ready to go. I had sent home the parent permission forms to be signed during the first week of school. Seeing so many forms come back signed was another indication that I was ready to take this journey with my students.

Full Steam Ahead

My students continued to show excited about the portfolio process. The announcement that it was time for students to look through their portfolios was met with clapping and cheering from two students. At least they were still hooked in!

Spontaneous group conversation did not come easily for my students, though. As I walked around with my clipboard, I found myself having to poke and prod and question to stimulate any conversation in the small groups. I do think it is funny how I thought I would just give them their portfolios, and they would know how to talk about their documents. Many of my students talked about the drawings they made on the outside of their portfolio folders. Still others made random comments that were not related to their work. It was already the beginning of October, and it was very clear we had a long way to go and a lot of work ahead of us.

A Change in Writing Instruction

A short time later, I had a breakthrough regarding writing conferencing and instruction. Even if none of my students had yet demonstrated reflective skills, at least something was happening inside of me. I realized I was so afraid of stifling my students when they were writing and of creating anxiety about their writing skills that I did not critically examine their work with them. Instead, I often offered positive praise and encouragement, but not much more. Through the reflection and assessment processes we were practicing while creating these portfolios, it occurred to me that this was not the most helpful or the most effective way to lead my students to become more skilled and fluent writers. While I vowed to continue to always give praise to my students about their writing, I needed to model for them how to accurately assess their work and not just say everything is fine. (I didn't know it at the time, but the word "good" would permeate my classroom ad nauseum before it would be stopped.) My resolution was to no longer give students only praise, but to be committed to providing specific, accurate feedback about their work.

As my study went on, I realized this was exactly what I was asking my students to do. I do not know why this never occurred to me before. The only reason that I have is that I wanted to encourage my young students to write in any way they could – both good or bad – because it was important for them to get their ideas down without worrying about spelling or what I might say when they

met with me. With my new plan, I would find something positive to say to students, and then show them the correct way to spell the words they wanted to write and give them strategies for how to improve. I was excited to think about the changes my new instructional tactic would bring about.

The Letter Q

A week or so later, students were given the task of creating the capital and lowercase letter Q using glue. There were many students who I noticed were having difficulty forming these letters correctly, especially the lowercase Q. I wanted students to practice the letters in a tactile, fun way so that they would be able to remember how to form them correctly the next time they made the letter.

“Today, my friends, we are going to make a really exciting project to add to our portfolios. You all know my favorite letter. What is it? That’s right! It is the letter Q. Well, I couldn’t help but notice that some of you are having trouble making my favorite letter the correct way. If you want to write words like quick, quiet, or Quiñones, you need to know how to write the letter Q correctly.

Here is what we are going to do: I am going to call each of you back to the table with me. When you come back to the table, you are going to make the capital and lowercase letter Q on this piece of construction paper with glue. Have you ever made letters with glue before? Something amazing happens when the glue dries. When it dries, you can feel the letters! We will be able to feel our letters when they are all dry. After you make your letters, we will put them on the

windowsill to dry until tomorrow. Then we will finish our letter Q projects.

While you are waiting for your turn, you need to do the work that I just explained to you. Before you come back to the table, be sure to check your letter line on your desk so that you know how to make the capital and lowercase Q the correct way. Get to work. I will call each of you soon. I don't mind if you talk as long as it is in a whisper voice.

Carl and Joseph, please come back to the table. You don't need to bring anything with you. Here is your paper. Use the glue bottle to make the capital letter Q. Great. Now make the lowercase letter Q. Do you remember how to do it? Fine. Let me write your name on your paper. Carry it carefully with two hands over to the windowsill. Find a place to put it away from the blower so it doesn't blow away. Okay, go back to your seat and get started on your work.

Steven, Michael, please come back to the table.

(Each student is called until everyone has had a chance to form his/her letter Qs).

Here are the letters I made. I really like how my letter Qs turned out. I think I made them just right. I will walk around so that you can look at my letters. Didn't I do a great job? Do they look right? I like that my capital Q is bigger than my lowercase Q. Look how the lowercase Q has that naughty tail that hangs down and flips. That lowercase Q is very naughty!

Carl: That looks neat!

Marissa: Wow! That looks nice.

Susan: Good job.

Karri: Pretty.

Doris: Can I see it? It looks really nice.

Thank you, my friends. We will let our letters dry and finish them tomorrow.

Wait until you see what we are going to do!

(The next day)

I checked all of our letter papers, and they are all dry. I am going to hand you your letter Q paper so that you can look at it. Do you like it? How does it feel? Isn't it neat that it is so bumpy? Hmmm... I can hardly see some of your letters! Why can't I see your letter Qs? Oh, yes. The glue dried, and when the glue dried it dried clear. Well, now we can hardly see our letters. Oh, wait! I know what to do. Watch this! If I take a marker, I can color over the letters that I made with glue. Wow! Now I can see them. I can see them much better if I color over them. I don't have to color the whole paper – just the part where I made my letters. Take a marker and color over your letters. Then you will be able to see them better. Great! They look fabulous! Try not to get marker on your desks.

Now that we colored our letters and can see them better, we need to talk about them. When I call you, bring your Q paper up to me. I am going to ask you some questions about your letters. I am going to write down what you say. When we are all done talking, you are going to put your Q paper in your portfolio.

Bianca, come on up and bring your paper. Everyone else needs to start working on your Five Senses paper.

Bianca, I am going to use my marker to write the letter Q on your paper right above where you made yours with glue. Is that okay? See how I wrote the capital and lowercase letter Qs? How do your Qs look compared to mine?

Bianca: I could have made them bigger. They are not the same as yours because mine doesn't have a flip.

That is true – your lowercase Q does not have a flip. I bet that next time you make a lowercase Q you will remember to make the flip. I like how your capital Q has the straight line in just the right place. You did a great job with your letters. Here is your portfolio. Let's put your Q paper in here. You can take your portfolio and start a pile on the counter. Thank you.

Melissa? Come on up here!

(Each student brings his/her paper up to talk about his/her letters and puts it in the portfolio. As students talk about their work, I record what they say in my field log. I used these notes of students' reflections to evaluate student progress and to plan instruction based on student needs.

Two days later, students created a writing sample that goes in their portfolios in much the same way as their letter Q paper. After students wrote, they conferenced with me about their work. After that, they put their paper in their portfolio folder.)

No Changes for Students

Students were quite busy creating documents to go into their portfolios. It was exciting to see their portfolios grow fatter and fatter with each paper that they added. On most days, we followed the same pattern as described above – students created documents, talked with me about them, and added them to their portfolios. That was the easy part.

Looking at my students' progress was more difficult. I guess I expected to see changes in my students take place quickly. Even by the beginning of November, it seemed I saw very little change in the way my students thought about their work, and it was quite frustrating. It still seemed that most students were not willing to take the risk and honestly assess their work, including the good and the bad. I began to think that my students were too young to learn how to reflect on their work, and that maybe this project was too far over their heads. Throughout writing conferences and small group portfolio discussions, students continued to make inaccurate, general, or superficial comments about their work.

The following pastiche is comprised of quotes from students during a small group discussion about their portfolio documents. Students were directed to talk about their portfolios one at a time in their group. I gave students many examples of what they could say when it was their turn. Then I walked around and listened in on the group discussions.

What students say about their portfolios

I like doing this so nicely.

I like my K paper because I made it right.

I like how nice I drew the C.

I like my C paper because I worked really hard.

I like my K paper because I stayed in the lines.

I like this because I drew me and my mommy and my daddy and my house.

I like how I made this.

I like my picture of robots.

I took my time on my papers, and I like it because I did pretty colors on them.

I like the paper I drew of my mom and me having a tea party.

Figure 1. Discussion Pastiche

It seemed so telling to me that each student had made an “I like” statement, even though I had given examples of how to tell things that they liked or did not like. It became clear to me on this day that my students were often willing to talk about their work in terms of what they liked, but were not as forthcoming when I asked them to discuss what they did not like or what they could have done better. None of my students were yet willing to take the risk of focusing on something they would like to change about their work, even though I had modeled these types of statements for them. However, I was happy to find that most students were able to take part in this type of group discussion and say something meaningful about their portfolio.

I had noticed this kind of omission before. At times, even when I asked students what they could have done better, they still focused on what they thought they did well. During a writing conference, I asked Carl what he could have done differently. He said, “I did good” several times, even after I restated the question in a few different ways.

Prompting and More Prompting

At the end of November, students were still requiring prompting to reflect on their work specifically and accurately. It was hard for me to accept this as adequate progress because I somehow thought my students would be able to make these reflections spontaneously and independently from my prompts.

I had to drop those expectations to really see the progress my students were making. I could see that with even more practice and more time, students would be able to become reflective about their work without so much prompting. But even if I had to prompt them, it seemed as if almost every student was making progress in being able to evaluate his/her work – that is, those who were willing to take risks and truly look at their work. One of the most frustrating things that occurred was students who would not answer me when I asked them questions about their work. There were those who would tell me “that is hard” when I asked them a question about their work. That, however, was preferable to those who said nothing. I had three students who, most times when asked about their work, would stare at me in silence. I had no idea what they were thinking because they would not say anything. All three students – all girls – were fairly quiet and well behaved in the classroom. I always had the feeling that they were reluctant to comment on their work for fear of criticism or feeling not good enough even though I always provided encouragement and praise to all students. It was just the way they looked at me, almost with slight fear in their eyes. I found this to be so strange because we interacted well outside of the realm of the portfolios. These girls often wanted to play with me at recess time, volunteered in class, and drew pictures for me. There was just something about the formality of the portfolio conference or their lack of confidence in their work that made the situation different.

This is a dialogue with Maria – one of the students who had a hard time answering my questions during our portfolio conferences.

Mrs. Quiñones: *Wow! Look at all of the letters you made on this page. I am so happy to see you could remember how to make so many letters the correct way.*

Maria: *I did them good.*

Mrs. Quiñones: *What could you have done better on your letter page?*

Maria: *Ummm. . .*

Mrs. Quiñones: *Can you find anything that you think you could do differently next time?*

Maria: *(stands there and looks at paper but says nothing)*

Mrs. Quiñones: *What don't you like about your work on your paper?*

Maria: *(long silence)*

Mrs. Quiñones: *Well, Maria, I think your work would be better if you would remember to make the capital J touch the top line. Look how tall that letter is. You need to do the same thing with the capital letters Y and Z. If you did that, you would be making your letters the correct way. When I ask you to do this job again, do you think you will be able to remember that?*

Maria: *(nods her head yes, grabs her paper, and walks back to her seat)*

I explained to the whole class that it was more helpful for them to say something rather than nothing when I asked them a question. If they said something, I would better know what they were thinking. I told students that I

could better understand their work, their ideas, and their work habits if they could talk to me about their work. I reinforced this idea with those who were reluctant to talk. I am pleased to report that there was a difference towards the end of my research study with these “silent three.” It seemed that the more we practiced being reflective, the more they got used to talking about their work. It became easier for them, and the rest of the class, too.

Is Anyone Listening?

Andrea was my third conference that day. By the time I met with her, my frustration level was fairly high. The two previous students that I had talked to left me feeling that they had not learned anything about evaluating their work so far this semester. When I asked Carl to tell me about his letters, he pointed to the one that was made incorrectly and said, “I did this one right” even though I had printed the letters on his page so he could see them written correctly. Joseph told me his work was done beautifully and nicely, even though his letters were not formed correctly and were extremely sloppy. Hearing these two boys evaluate their work so carelessly and inaccurately made me feel a little bit upset.

Then Andrea came to sit down with me. The task before us was to evaluate the work that she had done. Students were asked to form a capital and lowercase Q with glue the day before. Now that it was dry, I had written the letters below those that the student had formed so that we could compare them. Instead of drawing the letter Q on her paper, Andrea had made the letter U. When

I asked her to look at my letters and compare them to hers, she told me she liked hers because she liked the way she made them. I sat there in silence for a minute, just staring at Andrea. I really was not sure what to say because I could not believe what I was hearing. Thoughts were racing in my head. The most prominent one was “You mean we have worked all this time on evaluating our work and you do not even mention that you made the wrong letters? Don’t you listen to me?”

When words finally did come out of my mouth, they came out loudly and sternly. I told her that she had to look at her work and be able to talk about it – the good and the bad. I told her she needed to tell the truth about her work, not just say that it was good.

I noticed several students looking at me from their seats, probably because I was talking pretty loudly, which is something I almost never do. I decided it would benefit everyone in the class to hear my lecture. After all, even though Andrea was one of my most challenging students, she certainly was not the only one who would tell me their work was good when it was not. I quickly finished with Andrea. I prompted her to tell me that she had made the wrong letters, and sent her back to her seat.

I called everyone together on the carpet and repeated my whole lecture to the class using the same stern voice I had used with Andrea. I explained again that it is important to be able to look at work and see how you did. Sometimes

you find good things about your work, and sometimes you need to pick out bad things so that you know what you need to do better. I explained to my students that they needed to tell the truth about their work, and that saying “good” when they did not follow directions or “nice” when the work was sloppy was not okay.

These were all concepts that my students and I had talked about before. I had not ever used the words “tell the truth” about your work, though. I really think that is what caught their attention. Maybe I finally explained reflecting and evaluating their work in a concrete way that they could understand. I am sure the tone of my voice helped to capture their attention, too. The lecture seemed to have made a difference that day. The students that I met with after the lecture did a fine job of accurately assessing their work. When I met with Andrea again a few days later to talk about her work again, she did tell the truth about her work. She looked at her letter S and told me that it was “facing the wrong way,” which indeed it was. I felt we had turned a corner that day and were headed in the right direction.

Good

“Good” was a word that permeated my classroom during the portfolio process. “Good” was the most common response that I heard when students were asked to talk about their work. It was used so many times that it had lost all meaning. In October when I asked students how they did writing their letters, 21 out of 24 students told me “good” in some variation. This continued into the

beginning of November. While students were conferencing with me about their writing, I asked them what they thought about themselves as writers. Nineteen out of 23 students responded that they are “good” writers.

Although it took me some time to realize that the word “good” had become an all-purpose response for my students, I decided to take action with hope of changing my students’ responses to their work. The solution I devised was to ask students specific questions that could not be answered by the word “good.” This technique seemed to work in eliminating the over-use of the word “good.” I asked students to make comparisons within their work. Fewer students than usual answered with the word “good.” I asked students to tell what they could have done differently in their writing. This time, no student responded using the word “good.” That was at the end of November. In the beginning of December, I asked students if they worked their hardest while completing their task of drawing the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Only one student response included the word “good.”

It seemed that my students had made some progress while reflecting on their work. The word “good” had become so general that students were not specifically evaluating their work. And, as I had previously noticed, the more prompting and specific questioning that I used with my students, the more capable they were of making specific and accurate reflections of their work. My students still were not able to talk specifically about their work with no prompting, but

they were certainly making strides and becoming better able to answer questions about their work. I was leading, and they were following – a thing not easily accomplished in a Kindergarten classroom.

Putting It All Together

Then came the time to gather our portfolio documents and ready them in their final form. It all sounds so formal and well planned, when it was really a hectic time full of chaos. For a long time, I was not sure what final form the portfolios would take. As students were collecting documents throughout the semester, they put them in large folders I had made for them. This took place after they conferenced with me about each piece of work, and I added the date. The oak tag folders were great because students could easily add or remove papers. It also allowed for them to remove all of the pages and spread them out. This could not be the final form, however, because it was difficult to keep the papers in chronological order.

I finally got the idea for what I thought would be a great final form for the portfolios. I would punch holes in all of the pieces and place them in chronological order in a three-prong folder. I could later add the students' reflections. This way the piece of work and the reflection could be seen at the same time. The transferring of portfolio contents took place at the end of December. It did not take as long as I thought it would to get them all in order. Students helped place each page in chronological order. Then I paper clipped

them together, punched holes, and added the pages to the new folder. Students decorated the front cover of their new portfolio folder. I explained to students why it was good to arrange them this way, and how they were going to have one final conference with me about their portfolios. Students seemed excited to see at last how their portfolios were going to turn out.

The next day when our fifth grade buddies came, students placed the label descriptors (see Appendix O) on the chosen pieces of work. It was an asset to have the fifth grade buddies there to help, so that I did not have to go around to each student and assist him/her in placing their descriptors on the pages. However, both classes received a lecture about how important these portfolios were and how it was important to think about where to put the descriptors and not just place them randomly.

Most pairs of buddies did a fine job of this. During my conference with Michael, however, I noticed all of his descriptors were on the last few pieces of work. A few pages even had multiple descriptors. Michael told me that his buddy had gotten impatient with him and told him to just put all of the labels on one piece. That certainly was not the result I was looking for when I asked the buddies to help my class. I asked Michael if he would like me to help him re-label his pieces, but he said no. Unfortunately, Marvin's portfolio looked similar to Michael's. Marvin had no explanation of why he had placed multiple labels on

several pieces of work, no matter how many questions I asked him. I asked him if he wanted some help replacing his labels. He also said no.

Now that the labels were placed on the portfolio documents in their final form, students were ready to have their final conference with me. I asked students several questions regarding the labels they placed on their pieces of work. The question that had the most surprising answers was, “Which piece would you like to do over? Why would you like to do this over again?” I was surprised by many students’ answers because they were so wonderfully reflective! Most students responded that they would choose that piece to do over again so that they could do something differently or make it better in some way. A few students responded that they would like to do the piece over again because it was fun, and they liked doing it. I rejoiced in the fact that almost every student was able to reflect on his/her work in this specific way. I compiled student responses into a pastiche (see Figure 2).

Ωηψ ωουλδ ψου λικε το δο τηισ πιεχε οφ ωορκ οπερ αγαι

v?

It is all sloppy. I could make it better. *I could write something different.*

Because the lowercase Q doesn't look like it is supposed to be.

Because it is all crooked. If I did it over, it would turn out good.

I μεσσεδ υπ τηε λοωερχασε θ. Ιφ Ι ωουλδ δο ιτ αγαιν, Ι ωουλδ δ
ο ιτ ριγητ.

~~Because I want to do it differently. I want to do a different picture.~~

I drew myself too big and made colors on the side.

I like to do it, and I want to do it again.

I couldn't write tree. Next time I will be able to write it.

Because I didn't really know how to do it good, and I could do better.

Because I like it a lot. Because I didn't do the right letter.

Because it is a little scribbly. I could make it better by not scribbling.

I colored out of the lines, and I want to try again.

Βεχασε τηερε αρε αλλ τηοσε μαρκσ φρομ μψ ερασερ. Ι χουλδ μακε ιτ νε
ατερ.

Some of the letters are crooked. If I did it over, I could make them straight.

Figure 2. Pastiche of Reasons students want to do work over again

I was thrilled to see that students were able to put together the ideas that we had practiced all semester and use them in this final portfolio conference to reflect on their work. It was as if the final piece of the puzzle had just fallen into place, completing our time together this semester with these portfolios.

Unexpected Benefits

There were certain things that I had hoped would result from using portfolios with my students. I wanted to see improvement in quality of work, development of reflections skills, and assessment by students of their own work. However, throughout the semester, I was surprised and excited to find some unexpected benefits.

Parent-teacher conferences. During parent-teacher conferences in November, I show parents many examples of students work. This is the first conference of the year, and parents are generally very interested in seeing concrete examples of what their child has been doing in class. When I planned my research study, I did not plan to show the students' portfolios as a part of the parent-teacher conference. Once we began creating our portfolios, and I saw how neatly they contained many important documents, I changed my mind. The portfolio became the centerpiece of each parent-teacher conference. I was so proud to show each portfolio, even though they were not yet in their final form. I explained to parents how we created them, showed them the work inside, and described what was yet to come with the portfolios.

Although most parents did not have much to say about their child's portfolio, I truly enjoyed showing them off and using the documents to highlight student achievement. At our conference, Andrea's grandmother told me that Andrea walks around the house with a pile of papers saying, "This is my portfolio." Her grandmother seemed to think that Andrea did this because she wanted to be a model, but I suspected that she loved her Kindergarten portfolio so much that she was role-playing with it at home! That would mean that I had gotten through to Andrea, who was one of the biggest behavior challenges in my classroom. She had recently shown some improvement in reflecting on and assessing her work. That really gave me hope that I had given her something to be proud of.

Report cards. Another great revelation came to me around report card time. I was sitting at home just beginning to complete my students' report cards. I had all of my documents spread out on the table when I realized something horrible – the most recent writing sample that I intended to use to level my students' writing had not been completed correctly. It was obvious by looking at the samples that students were given help instead of completing the task independently. Why did that happen? For reasons I am unsure of, my substitute teacher had helped students with their writing despite my strict instructions that it needed to be completed with no help. Here I was, out on medical leave for the second time this year, counting on using these samples to judge students' writing

skills, and they were completely invalid. I had nothing else to look at to evaluate students' writing, and I was not able to retrieve anything else from my classroom. It took me only a few seconds to decide that I needed to disregard those samples and needed to come up with another way to evaluate my students' skills.

It only took me another few seconds to realize I had all of my student portfolios at home. I could use the documents in the portfolios to level student writing because they contained many writing samples. It was the perfect solution to my problem. Because the portfolio neatly contained everything I needed in a central place, it made completing my report cards easier than ever. Not only did I use the portfolio to level student writing, but also used it for more observational areas, such as deciding if a student worked neatly or formed his/her letters correctly.

The portfolios worked as a perfect companion to my student report cards because everything that I needed was right there. Our Kindergarten report card is quite subjective. The portfolios provided justification for the marks my students earned in various areas. It would be an easy job to explain to any parent who had questions about her child's report card because I could just show her the evidence contained in the portfolio.

Writing comments about my students on each report card was also a little easier thanks to my data collection in the classroom. I had written so much about each student in my field log that it was easy to see what I wanted to write on the

report card. In both my observational notes and reflective comments, I had the “essence” of each student already recorded. There were things that I had written in my field log that I may not have identified if I hadn’t been writing everything down so diligently. I was so thrilled to find that using portfolios with my students could be such a benefit to them and to me in both expected and unexpected ways.

DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout the process of data analysis, I focused on my research question to guide me in processing and understanding the data I had collected. Because I had collected a multitude of data, and still felt as if I could have collected more, focusing on my research question helped me to be open to any changes that took place in my classroom throughout the intervention period. It also helped me weed out any extraneous information and to focus on events and changes that happened as a result of my research study. I used various data analysis techniques to help me create an accurate picture of what took place in my classroom and to help me make meaning out of the data I had collected.

In looking at my data, I realized that analyzing it was a cyclical process. I could not just read my field log once, code it, and be finished. I read my field log and coded it during the data collection process several times. Then I reread and recoded my log after the data collection process was finished. The same was true for student work. Each of these items is not an end unto itself. The process continued until I felt I had made the most meaning from the data that I had.

Analysis During Data Collection

Through my readings of Ely, Vinz, Anzul, and Downing (1997) and Holly, Arhar, and Kasten (2005), I realized the importance of interacting with my data as I was collecting it. It certainly would not be enough just to collect all of my data, and then try to make sense of it. To truly understand the changes that

were taking place in my classroom, I needed to frequently review my field log and my students' work.

Field Log Analysis

Each day as I recorded my classroom observations in my field log, I would read back over what I had written. As I entered my observations into my computer, I also wrote reflections about what I had seen and heard. These reflections helped me to make sense of what I had observed in the classroom and allowed me to further process the data I had collected. As the time went on and I collected more data, I continually read my field log to stay involved with my data. Reading my field log also allowed me to make any necessary changes to my curriculum based on what I had observed in the classroom.

As I continually read my field log, I began to notice certain items that were recurring. I began to write codes in the margins of my log so that I could better notice what topics fit together. Ely et al. (1997) describe coding this way: "We read and reread a portion of data and provide labels – usually notes in the margins – that identify a meaning unit" (p. 162). Coding my field log allowed me to classify the data I had.

Student Work Analysis

Looking at my students' work throughout my research study gave me clues as to how well students were able to reflect on their work and accurately assess what they had done. I used my students' work as a guide to help me plan

the appropriate intervention for students who needed extra help with not only the work concepts, but also with their reflective and assessment skills as well. I planned whole class and small group activities and lessons based upon what I observed in my students' work.

Interview Analysis

My students participated in a mid-study interview where they talked with me about their portfolio and the documents included in it. These interviews allowed me to talk in-depth with students about their pieces of work and how they felt about them. I typed all student responses to the interview questions and wrote reflective comments after the interviews were completed.

Memo Analysis

At the mid-point in my study, I wrote a Mid-Study Analysis memo that allowed me to see clearly what data I had already collected and what I still wanted to collect. This memo guided me in my further classroom observations and narrowed the focus of what I was looking for during each observation. In this memo, I also wrote a series of sub-questions for my main research question. These sub-questions assisted me in answering my research question and showed me how I could make my study richer by finding the answers to these questions.

Coding Analysis

I analyzed the codes that I had created in my field log as I was still collecting my data. As I looked at my codes, I found codes that were related to

each other. I also went back and recoded my field log. Some codes that I had originally written no longer applied as I looked at my data in a different way. I merged some codes to help make more sense of what I had found. I created new codes that helped me to describe the data I had collected.

Analysis Through Educational Philosophers

After reading the works of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Lisa Delpit et al., and Lev Vygotsky, I was able to see the work that I was doing related to my research study was grounded in the ideas of these great educational philosophers. As I read each philosopher and wrote about what I read, I found links from each educational tenet to my study. I could relate quotes and ideas from each book to things that had taken place in my classroom. This helped me to examine what was taking place in my classroom in a different light and allowed me to see that my research project had a sound educational base.

Analysis After Data Collection

Even though I had analyzed my data as I made my way through my research study, I knew that I still had quite a lot of work to do to make meaning of the data that I had after I was finished collecting it.

Field Log Analysis

I again needed to analyze my field log data after my collection period was done. I made sure that all of my reflections were written and went back and added thoughts to some areas of my field log. I felt as if my field log was the best

source of data that I had to give a true picture of what had taken place in my classroom. Therefore, I was anxious to see that it was complete before I could start analyzing my data in its final form.

Student Work Analysis

I had many work samples to look at through my research process because my students were collecting documents and putting them into portfolios. Once the intervention process was over, I collected student portfolios and graded them using a rubric that I had created (see Appendix Q). This rubric aided me in seeing which students were able to accurately assess and reflect on their work and which students were still in the beginning stages of doing so. The rubric was a quick and easy way for me to get a picture of student understanding.

Interview/ Survey Analysis

Students completed a survey at the end of my research study (see Appendix R). On the survey, they gave their opinions and feelings about the portfolio process. This survey helped me to understand how students felt about the portfolio they had created. After reading student surveys, I chose to interview certain students based on their survey results.

All students also participated in a final interview with me about their portfolios. They labeled certain works in the portfolio according to specific criteria. Talking with students and seeing their labels allowed me to better see how students felt about the work they completed.

Bins and Theme Analysis

After coding my field log, I organized my codes into bins that described the overriding themes tying the codes together (Ely et al., 1997). I created a graphic organizer that showed the relationship of the codes and bins to my research question (see Figure 1). This helped me to see the main points that emerged from my research study. I then wrote theme statements that described the bins. These theme statements showed me the main ideas that emerged from my data.

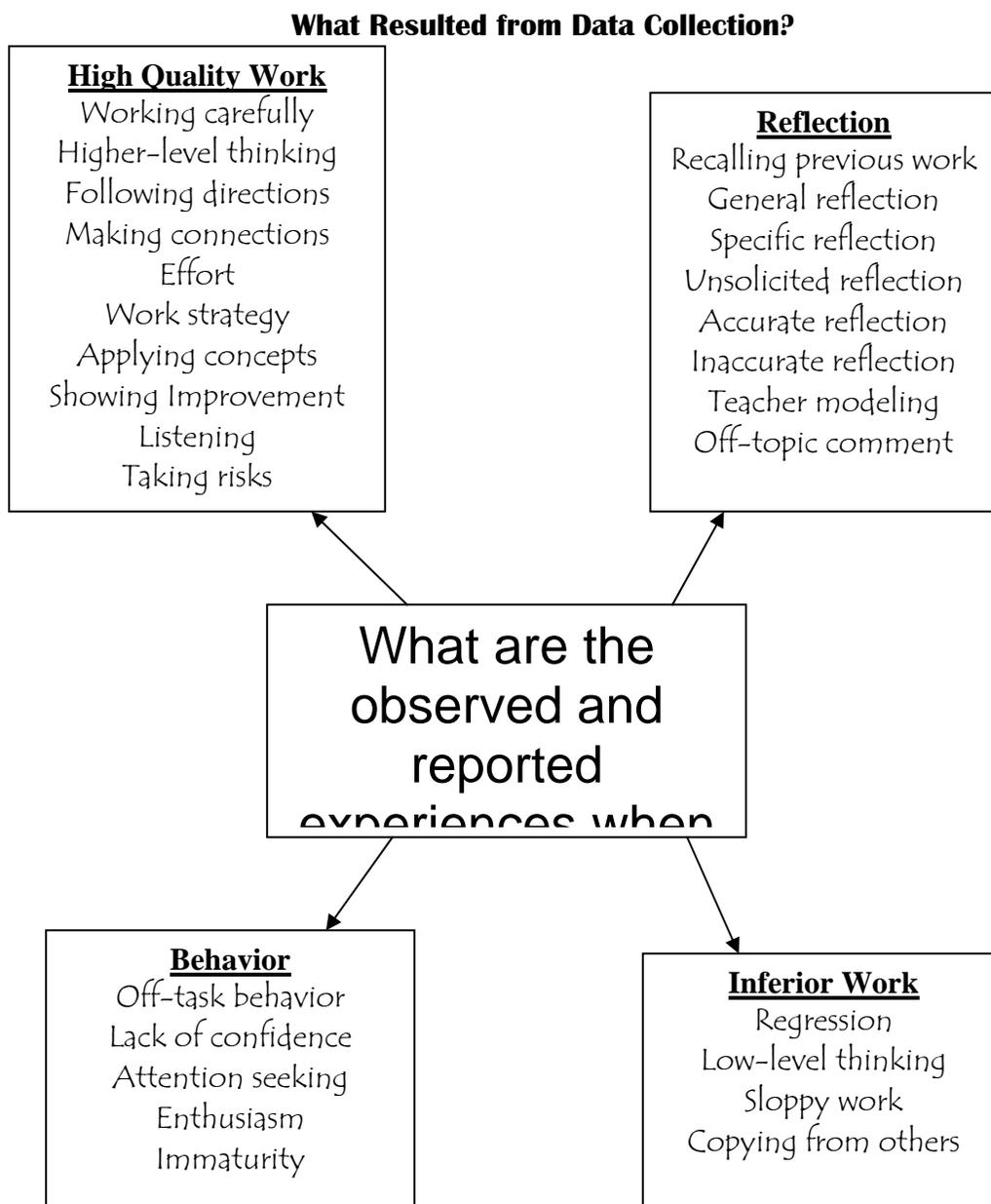


Figure 3. Codes, Bins, and Themes Graphic Organizer

These are the theme statements I created using the codes and bins taken from my field log:

1. **High Quality work:** Students created high quality work while creating their portfolios. This included students taking risks in their work, demonstrating higher-level thinking, and following directions.
2. **Inferior work:** Although many students exhibited a higher quality of work, at times some students continued to copy from others, create sloppy work, and demonstrate low-level thinking.
3. **Reflection:** When students first began reflecting on their work, they made general or inaccurate comments. As they gained skills through practice and teacher modeling, their reflections become more specific and accurate.
4. **Behavior:** While many students showed enthusiasm for the portfolio process, there were still instances of off-task behavior, immaturity, and attention seeking behaviors.

Literary Devices as Analysis

In writing my story to tell what took place during my research study, I found it helpful to use various types of literary devices. These literary devices helped me to give a real picture of what had happened in my classroom. One device that I used is the pastiche. A pastiche is data presented from multiple perspectives. It is a compilation of ideas with a common topic (Ely et al., 1997). I used a pastiche to present quotes from my students illustrating how they were all too willing to talk about what they liked in their work, but none were willing to discuss what they did not like. Using the pastiche to show the students' quotes seemed like the best way to have the students' voices heard.

I also used the form of an anecdote to tell part of my story. There was one particularly frustrating day that I described in an anecdote. Telling part of the story in an anecdote was my way of helping readers to experience a little of what had happened that day.

In presenting my story, I also used dialogue to explain how some students were reluctant to talk during our conferences about their work. Using the dialogue seemed an effective way to highlight how little some students would talk about their work when I questioned them about it.

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of my research study was to answer the question, “What are the observed and reported experiences when portfolios are implemented in the Kindergarten classroom?” After analyzing the data that I had collected, it became apparent that there were several recurring themes that emerged. Ely et al. (1997) wrote, “If themes ‘reside’ anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them” (p. 206). It was now my job to synthesize the data that I had collected and sorted into bins and themes.

I realized there was one overriding metatheme that permeated the data I had gathered. Ely et al. (1997) describe metathemes as “major constructs that highlight overarching issues in a study which may be considered against extant literature and experience” (p. 206). This is the metatheme that encompasses my research and findings: Students could not think critically about their work unless they are specifically taught to do so through modeling, practice, and experience. This metatheme related to each subsequent theme that emerged from my field log, student work, surveys, interviews, codes and bins.

High Quality Work: *Students produced high quality work while creating their portfolios.*

As I sorted through my field log over and over, it became apparent to me that students were making more progress than I thought they were through my

experiences in the classroom. As I looked back over my data, my field log was proof for me that something was changing in my classroom. It was difficult for me to notice it when I was knee-deep in the midst of portfolios and papers and conferences, but seeing the data again from the outside allowed me to acknowledge what changes had taken place.

My field log shows that students improved their quality of work as they created their portfolios, although it certainly did not happen quickly. In the first few weeks, there was very little change. Many students produced work that was sloppy or that did not follow the directions. This type of work decreased through the duration of my study. Student writing skills improved as a result of all of the practice and instruction students received, but students also began to see areas where they needed to improve because of our conferences and teacher modeling. In the beginning of the study, when I asked students to evaluate their work, they often answered “good.” At the end of the study, students were able to point out specific areas that needed improvement. As I asked students what they could have done differently on their writing page, they responded, for example, “Make spaces between my words” or “Switch these words around” or “Make that a capital I.” With help, students were able to take risks, demonstrate higher-level thinking, and follow directions more successfully.

I also noticed that students began to work more carefully. This became the subject of many conferences as students examined their work. When I asked

students what they did well they often responded, “I took my time.” Many discussions ensued about working slowly and carefully to be sure the work is the best it could be. Students reported to me in our conferences that that was a work strategy they employed, especially in the area of writing.

As I used the rubric I created to evaluate students’ portfolios, I determined that 14 out of 22 students created four or more documents that showed their best effort. This earned them the rating of superior. Seven out of 22 students earned the rating of acceptable by creating two to three documents that showed their best effort. Only one student fell into the category of not yet evident by having zero documents that showed his/her best effort.

Dewey wrote, “Growth is not enough; we must also specify the direction in which growth takes place, the end towards which it tends” (1997, p. 36). Using a rubric to evaluate student portfolios allowed students to see which direction they need to improve and allowed students to see what the expectations were in advance so they would know what to work towards. Having the rubric set up prior to the creation of the portfolio made the expectations clear to me and my students. This aided students in completing higher quality work.

Students completed a survey at the end of my study regarding their feelings towards their portfolios and the portfolio process. Eighteen out of 23 students reported that they felt creating their portfolio helped them to do better work. The survey allowed me to gain insight into the minds of my students and

their feelings about their portfolios. Understanding my students' feelings and thoughts helped me to plan my instructional activities around student frustrations, misunderstandings, or boredom. "He must, in addition, have that sympathetic understanding of individuals as individuals which gives him an idea of what is actually going on in the minds of those who are learning" (Dewey, 1997, p. 39).

Inferior Work: Although many students exhibited a higher quality of work, at times some students continued to copy from others, create sloppy work, and demonstrate low-level thinking.

Copying from others' work was a problem in the classroom, especially when it came to journal writing. Although I did everything I could to encourage students to think and work on their own, sitting in small groups was conducive to copying. There were several times when I moved a student because he or she would not work independently. The copying from others seemed confined to two tables. I wrestled with the idea of spreading out those who were copying or leaving them contained where they were for fear they would "infect" the other tables with their copying. I noted fewer and fewer incidents of copying as my study went on, which suggests that students became more confident as they gained skills and learned to evaluate their work. It appeared that copying was a coping strategy for some students.

Sloppy work was another issue that plagued some students. Although almost every student at some time produced work that was sloppy, this only

remained an issue for a handful of students. For one student in particular, Doris, it became a perpetual problem. Doris appeared to be capable of completing the work correctly and neatly – in fact, on a few rare occasions she turned in work that was done perfectly. However, on a daily basis, this was not the case. I thought that I could motivate Doris by helping her create a portfolio she was proud of and by giving her a lot of attention and praise for things she had done well. Unfortunately, nothing I did seemed to make a difference for her. From the beginning to the end of the study, Doris’s work remained mainly unchanged. She continued to produce sloppy work and not follow directions.

Figures 4 and 5 serve as examples of growth over time. In Figure 4, Melissa wrote each capital letter in the alphabet in the beginning of October. Melissa is a very capable student concerning her academic work. She knew all of her letters when she entered Kindergarten. The letters that she wrote were fine, but she included several letters that were reversed. This is something that Melissa and I had talked about on several occasions. Figure 5 shows the work that Melissa did towards the end of my study in December. It shows that Melissa correctly wrote each capital letter. Through our conferences and class discussions about our portfolios, Melissa was able to move from fine but careless work to creating work that was completed correctly, neatly, and carefully.

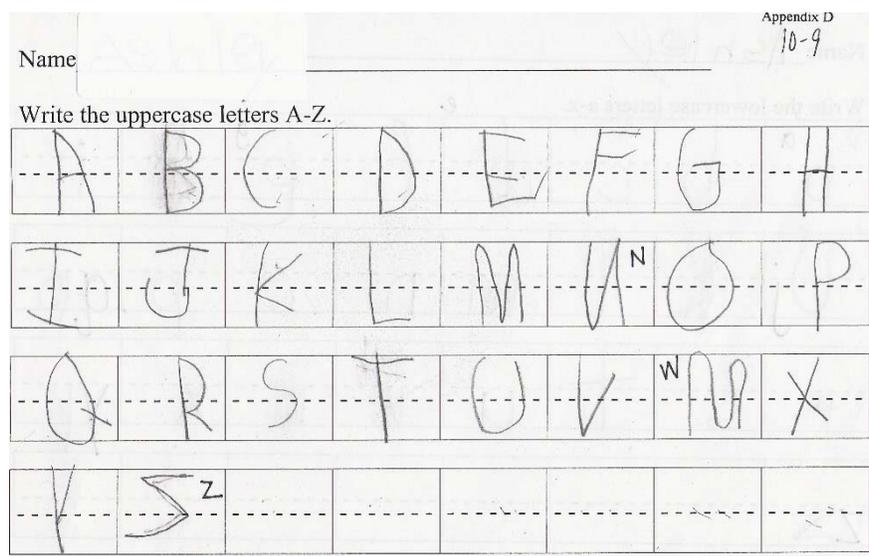


Figure 4. Careless student work in beginning of study

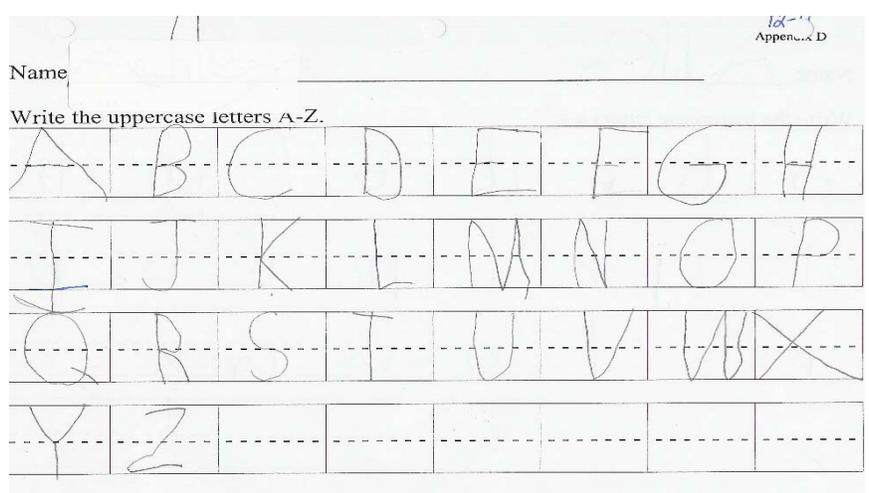


Figure 5. Careful student work towards end of study

Reflection: *When students first began reflecting on their work, they made general or inaccurate comments. As they gained skills through practice and teacher modeling, their reflections become more specific and accurate.*

Just as Doris continued to grapple with the idea of creating neat work, she also showed little growth in the area of reflecting on her work. Each time that I met with Doris about her work, she reported to me that she liked her work, that she worked hard on it, and that she did a nice job. While apparently she was able to grasp the “catch phrases” of reflection, she was unwilling or unable to understand what they meant as applied to her own work. Doris was one of the only students who showed this lack of progress in her work.

Looking back to what I read in Freire (2000) showed me how important it was to give my students accurate feedback on their work in order for them to grow and learn. Doing this would allow students to rely less on outside feedback and make judgments about their own work. Freire wrote, “Any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression” (2000, p. 55). This affirmed the practice of teaching students to reflect on their own work and emphasized the importance of thinking about work.

The rubric that I used to grade student portfolios showed that 12 out of 22 students had three or more specific reflective statements included in their portfolios. Eight students included one to two specific reflective statements in

their portfolios. There were two students who did not have any specific reflective statements in their portfolios. These portfolios only contained general or superficial statements.

The rubric that I used also rated students on the accuracy of their reflections. Sixteen out of 22 students had three or more reflections in their portfolios that agreed with the thoughts of the teacher. Six students had one to two reflections that agreed with the thoughts of the teacher. Every student had some reflections that agreed with the thoughts of the teacher. There were no students who fell into the category of not yet evident.

Behavior: While many students showed enthusiasm for the portfolio process, there were still instances of off-task behavior, immaturity, and attention seeking behaviors.

On the student survey at the end of my study, 19 out of 23 students reported that they liked collecting their work to form a portfolio. Pippi told me she did not like it because “it was so hard.” Jack told me he did not like forming his portfolio because “some I did a bad job on and some I didn’t.”

Overwhelmingly, however, students showed enthusiasm for the portfolio process.

When asked if they would like to create another portfolio using different work, 16 out of 23 students reported that they would. After the survey was completed, I interviewed those students who replied that they would not like to create another portfolio because I was curious about the reasons why they would

not like to have another portfolio. Bianca told me she would not like to create another portfolio because she already has one. Amberly simply replied, “Sometimes I don’t want to make another one.” Doris told me she would not like to create another portfolio because she likes the one that she has already. Charles responded, “Because it is so much work.” Again, the majority of students in the class enjoyed creating their portfolio so much that they would choose to make one again.

Despite this enthusiasm for portfolios and the process that students underwent to create them, there were still underlying behavior issues on occasion. For Shirley, it was seeking attention almost constantly. While she was working, Shirley would call me over to look at her paper. She would always ask the same question – “Do you like my work?” If I was not available to praise her, she would praise herself – “I did such a great job on this!” I kept noting in my field log that I could not tell if Shirley received a lot of attention at home and, therefore, expected me to provide her with the same level of attention in school, or if she received little attention at home that made her over-eager for praise and acceptance in my classroom. This continued for Shirley on a daily basis, although the frequency of demands did decrease throughout the time of my study.

The demand for attention became problematic when it interrupted other students or events in the classroom. At the beginning of the study, both Shirley and Doris seemed only able to work if I were at their side. This, too, improved as

time went on. However, I do believe these to be typical Kindergarten behaviors. Walberg (2003) believes that when a child is engaged in meaningful work, he/she will not act out. He writes, “A high degree of engagement is indicated by an absence of irrelevant behavior and by concentration on tasks” (p. 95). I did not find this to be the case for every student. Although my students reported in clear majority that they enjoyed the portfolio process and would like to create another portfolio, this did not seem to stop a select few from exhibiting inappropriate classroom behaviors and work habits.

Summary

In investigating the question, “What are the observed and reported experiences when portfolios are implemented in the Kindergarten classroom?”, I found that students created higher quality work and grew in their reflective thinking skills. I also found, however, that engagement in meaningful tasks does not effectively manage all behavior issues. Also, not every student was moved to produce high quality work in every instance. By keeping myself open to any changes in my students and myself, I was able to synthesize my data and extract meaningful information from what I had collected.

THE NEXT STEP

After having implemented portfolios in my classroom, I would not hesitate to use them again. I feel that using portfolios allowed me more opportunities to meet one-on-one with students. Although these conferences with students took a lot of time, they became an important way for me to give each student the individualized instruction that he/she needed.

In having my students create portfolios again, however, I would conference with students on a rotating basis instead of having to talk to every student each day. Doing this would allow me to have a little more time with each student and take the pressure off me of having to talk daily with each student. Talking with only a portion of the class about different tasks would help me to be able to meet with all students in a particular group the day of the task.

In Kindergarten, I found it important to meet with students as soon as possible about their work, especially with their writing. If I waited too long, students would forget what they did, what they wrote, or why they did what they did. There were a few times during my study that I found it impossible to see each student on the day the work was completed. The conferences that I had with students the day after the work was completed were not as rich as the conferences that I conducted with students immediately after completing their work. If I had the responsibility of meeting with only a portion of the class about each task, I

would be assured that I would be able to talk with everyone that I was scheduled to meet with.

Realizing that students loved their portfolios showed me that students were eager to do work that they could be proud of. I would not hesitate to involve my students in any other major project in my classroom. In the past, I was hesitant because my students are so young. Having my students create portfolios proved to me once and for all that my students would be enthusiastic about anything that I presented to them as being worthwhile and exciting.

The next time that I have my students create portfolios, I plan on giving them more choices of the documents that they could include in their folder. This time, each student added the same documents to their portfolio. I decided which documents students would include, while students decided which documents would bear the descriptor labels. I believe that giving more choice to students would give them a stronger sense of ownership in the project. It would also be more interesting during group discussion to have each student show which documents they chose to include and why. Increasing the sense of ownership in the project could be a way to solve some of the behavior issues that I experienced with my students because they would be more invested in their portfolio. This could also give students the determination to help them create higher quality work.

In order to help students develop their reflective thinking skills more acutely, I believe it would be helpful to do teacher modeling in small groups. By doing this, I could work with students with the same needs more efficiently. I could help those who needed to practice their reflective thinking and help those who needed to refine their reflective thinking by being more specific in their comments. I would also consider creating small groups based on heterogeneously and homogeneously mixing students at various reflective levels. Mixing students heterogeneously would allow those lower functioning students to hear specific reflective comments. Mixing students homogeneously would allow students at the same level to challenge each other to higher levels of thinking and analysis.

I also see a benefit to working on a portfolio project for a longer period of time. Although my study was conducted over several months, I truly believe that if it had continued my students would have continued to gain skills in reflective thinking and assessment of their work. Repetition and practice seemed to help my students in these skill areas. To have practiced these skills for a longer period of time would enable my students to refine their skills and allow those who still struggled with these concepts to make them more concrete. Also, creating a portfolio over a longer period of time would enable students to see more growth in their own personal academic skills. It would assist them in remembering concepts that we covered much earlier in the year instead of only weeks before.

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RESOURCES

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Appendix A

MORAVIAN COLLEGE

August 23, 2006

Jessica Quiñones

331 Adams Street
Northampton, PA 18062

Dear Jessica Quiñones:

The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has accepted your proposal: "Kindergarten Students and Portfolios: Moving Beyond Simply Showcasing Work." Given the materials submitted, your proposal received an expedited review. A copy of your proposal will remain with the HSIRB Chair.

Please note that if you intend on venturing into other topics than the ones indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB about what those topics will be.

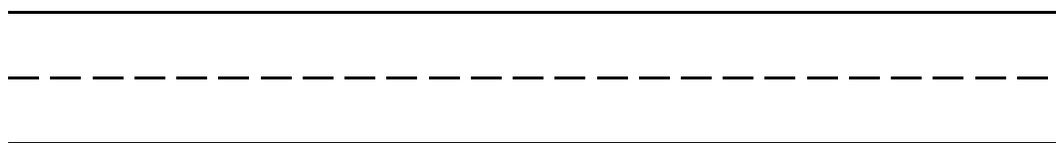
Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

This letter has been sent to you through U.S. Mail and e-mail. Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone (610-861-1415) or through e-mail (medwh02@moravian.edu) should you have any questions about the committee's requests.

Debra Wetcher-Hendricks
Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board
Moravian College

Appendix B

Ωριτε ψουρ ναμε ον τηε λινεσ. Τηεν δραω α πιχτυρε οφ
ψουρσελφ.



Appendix C

Name _____ Date _____

Draw a picture of your family. When you are done, I will write down what you tell me about your picture.

Appendix D

Name _____ Date _____

Draw a picture of a character from one of the stories we have read.

Character's Name _____

Book Title _____

Appendix E

Name _____

Write the uppercase letters A-Z.

-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Appendix F

Name _____

Date _____

My favorite part of school is

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed middle line, repeated seven times.

Appendix G

Name _____ Date _____

I can

Appendix H

Date _____

Write your name on the lines.

Appendix I

Name _____ Date _____

In Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse Mr. Slinger, Lilly's teacher, takes away her purse. Draw a picture to show what you would do if you were Lilly. After you finish your picture, I will write down what you tell me about your picture.

Appendix K

Name _____ Date _____

I enjoy going to

Appendix M

Name _____ Date _____

Draw what happens at the beginning, middle, and end of Knuffle Bunny.

Beginning	Middle	End

Appendix N

Name _____ Date _____

At night I

Handwriting practice lines consisting of solid top and bottom lines with a dashed midline, repeated seven times.

Appendix O

Δεσκριπτορ Λαβελσ φορ Πορτφολιο Δοχυμεντσ

My favorite piece

My best work

Piece I worked the hardest on

Piece I would like to do over

Piece I would like to show Mommy/Daddy

Piece I am most proud of

Appendix P

Final Portfolio Conference
(Interview regarding document labels)**Name:****Date: January 3, 2007**

My favorite piece:
What makes this your favorite piece?

My best work:
Why is this your best work?

Piece I worked the hardest on:
How can you tell you worked hard on this?

Piece I would like to do over again:
Why would you like to do this over?

Piece I would like to show Mommy or Daddy:
What could you tell Mom or Dad about this work?

Piece I am most proud of:
Why are you so proud of this work?

Appendix Q

Rubric for Kindergarten Portfolios

Name _____

	Superior	Acceptable	Not Evident Yet
Depth of Reflections	3 or more specific statements (e.g. - I formed the letters correctly.)	1-2 specific statements	Only general/superficial statements (e.g. - I did better.)
Accuracy of Reflections	3 or more reflections agree with thoughts of the teacher	1-2 reflections agree with thoughts of the teacher	No reflections agree with thoughts of the teacher
Effort	4 or more pieces show student's best effort	2-3 pieces show student's best effort	0-1 piece shows student's best effort

Appendix R

Student Survey

Did you like the collecting your work for your portfolio?



Do you think that creating your portfolio has helped you to do better work?



Would you like to create another portfolio with different work?



Did you talk about your portfolio at home?



Appendix S

Carl	
Joseph	
Steven	
Michael	
Marrissa	
Jack	
David	
Ansley	
Susan	
Shirley	
Pippi	
	Date _____

Karri	
Doris	
Amberly	
Kiki	
Maria	
Andrea	
Justin	
Marvin	
Charles	
Bianca	
Melissa	

Date _____

Appendix T

September 29, 2006

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am currently taking classes towards a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses help me to examine my teaching methods and provide the best learning environment possible for my students.

I am in the midst of completing research for my Master's thesis. My research will examine the effects of having my students create portfolios. This means that students will complete work and save it in a folder. We will look over the work periodically, and I will encourage students to reflect on what they have done. I will be meeting with students one-on-one to take a closer look at their work and to elicit thoughts about their work. I am very excited about the possibility of helping students create better quality work and helping them remember what we have done in the past!

I will be gathering information to support my study through observations, student work, conferences, and student surveys. I would like for your child to be a part of my research study. In order for your child to participate, I need your permission. If you choose for your child not to participate in my research study, he/she will still participate in the portfolio process. However, I will not use your child's data when writing my research study. There will be no negative consequences for students who choose not to participate in the study. You may withdraw your child from the study at any time by notifying me in writing that you no longer choose to have your child participate.

I will keep all student names and identifying information confidential. When I write my research report, I will use pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. All research materials will be kept in a secure location.

Your child may only participate in my study if I receive your written permission below. I will be explaining to the class that I am doing this project as a part of my own homework for a class that I am taking. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please contact me at school. My professor at Moravian College is Dr. Charlotte Zales. You can contact her with any questions or concerns at (610) 625 – 7958 or by email at crzales@moravian.edu.

If you approve of your child being a participant in my teacher research study, please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter as soon as possible. Thank you for your help!

Mrs. Quiñones

I understand that Mrs. Quiñones will be observing and collecting data as part of her research on portfolios. My child has permission to be a participant in the study.

Child's Name _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix U

Εξπλανατιον το Στυδεντς οφ Ρεσεαρχη Στυδψ

“Τοδαψ ιν Κινδεργαρτεν ωε αρε γοιγγ το στарт το σαπε σ
ομε οφ τηε ωορκ τηат ωε δο ιν χλασσ. Ι αμ περψ εξχιτεδ τηат
ωε ωιλλ βε αβλε το γο
βαχκ ανδ λοοκ ат σομε οφ τηε τηινγс τηат ωε ηαπε αλρεαδψ δ
ονε. Επερψ
ωεεκ, ωε ωιλλ σαπε σομε οφ ουρ ωορκ ανδ πυт ιт ιν ωηат ωε χα
λλ α
πορτφολιο. Ι ωανт υс το δο τηис σο τηат ωε χан στарт το τηιν
κ αβουт ωηатκινδ οφ ωορκ ωε αρε δοιγγ ανδ σεε ηοω ωε ηαπε γ
οττεν βεττερ ат σομε
τηινγс ас ωε χοντινυе ιν Κινδεργαρτεν.

Σομε οφ ψου κνωω τηат Ι αμ νοт οηλψ α τεαχηер βυт αλс
ο α στυδενт. Ι таке α χλασσ ат Μοραπιαν Χολλεγε τηат Ι δο α
λοт οφ ωορκ φορ. Παρτ
οφ μψ ηομεωορκ ιс το ηελп ψου χρεατε τηεσε πορτφολιοс. Ι αμ
γοιγγ το βε ασκινγ ψου α λοт οφ θυεсτιοηс αβουт ωηат ψου τη
ινκ αβουт ουр πορтφολιοс ανδμεετιγγ ωιτη εαχη οφ ψου. Ι αμ γ
οιγγ το ωριτε δοωη α λοт οφ ωηат ψου
τελλ με σο τηат Ι χан σηαρε ιт ωιτη μψ Μοραπιαν χλασσ.

Ι ηαπε ασкеδ ψουρ παρεηтс το σιγη α παπερ φορ με τελλи
γγ με τηат
ιт ιс οκαψ φορ με το σηαρε ωηат ψου σαψ ανδ δο. Ι ωανт τηат
το βε οκαψωιτη ψου, τοο. Ιφ ψου δεχιδе τηат ψου δон’т ωант т
ο βε а парт οφ μψ
сτυδψ ανψμορε, τελλ ψουρ μομ οр дад. Τηεψ ωιλλ ωριτε а νοт
ε τελλινγ με

τηατ ψου δεχιδεδ ψου δον'τ ωαντ το παρτιχιπατε. Ψου ωιλλ στι
 λλ δο αλλ οφ τηεσαμε φυν τηινγσ ωε αρε δοινγ ιν χλασσ ωηετηε
 ρ ψου ωαντ το βε ινχλυδεδ ιν
 μψ στυδψ ορ νοτ. Αφτερ ωε αρε αλλ δονε ωιτη ουρ πορτφολιος,
 Ι αμ γοινγ το
 ωριτε α ρεαλλψ λογγ παπερ αβουτ ωηατ ωε διδ ιν ουρ Κινδεργα
 ρτεν χλασσ.

Ι ωιλλ σηαρε ωιτη ψου ωηατ Ι ηαπε δονε ωηεν Ι αμ φινισ
 ηεδ. Ιτ ωιλλ τακε με α λογγ τιμε το γετ ιτ δονε βεχαυσε Ι αμ γοι
 νγ το τρψ μψ βεστ
 το ωριτε επερψτηινγ ωε ηαπε δονε ιν Κινδεργαρτεν. Τηατ ωαψ,
 οτηερ
 Κινδεργαρτεν τεαχηερσ χαν δο τηε σαμε τηινγ ωιτη τηειρ χλασ
 σεσ. Ι αμ γλαδψου ωιλλ βε ηελπινγ με ωιτη μψ προφεχτ

Appendix V

April 25, 2006

Dear [REDACTED]

During the 2006 – 2007 school year, I will be taking courses towards my Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Moravian College. These courses help me to examine my practices as a teacher and learn the most effective ways of teaching in order to provide the best learning experience for my students. During the fall semester, I will be involved with collecting data for my thesis. In the spring semester, I will be writing about my findings.

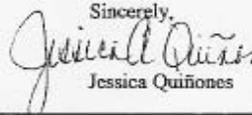
Moravian's thesis program requires that I conduct a systematic study of my own teaching practices. The focus of my research this year is creating portfolios. By researching creating portfolios I hope to find out how to motivate my students to create higher quality work and become reflective thinkers. I intend to complete twelve weeks of research and intervention in my classroom throughout the months of September through December.

As a part of my study about portfolios, students will collect work in a folder. Each week they will look at the documents they have collected. After ten weeks, students will label their work with descriptors such as "My favorite piece" or "Piece that was the hardest for me". Students will conference with me twice during the twelve weeks so that they can share thoughts and feelings about their work.

All of the children in my classroom will be involved in compiling a portfolio as part of the daily operation of Kindergarten. However, participation in my study is completely voluntary. I will be having parents sign a consent form to allow their student to participate in my study. If a parent chooses not to allow their child to participate in the study I will not be using that student's data for my research report. The student will, however, still create a portfolio. All children's names will be kept confidential. I will use pseudonyms when referring to children in my research report. Minor details about the student may be altered to ensure confidentiality. All research notes and materials will be secured in a protected location.

My professor this semester is Dr. Charlotte Zales. She can be contacted at Moravian by phone at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns about my research project, please feel free to talk to me at school or by email. Please sign the bottom portion of this letter and return it to me. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

 Jessica Quiñones

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study. I have read and understand this consent form. Jessica Quiñones has my permission to conduct this research study at [REDACTED].

Principal's Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 5/1/06

