

Preparing a Homeschool Portfolio

by Shirley M.R. Minster

A portfolio is a viable method to assess, both continually and annually, a student's academic progress. This approach helps both parent and student compare work objectively during the school year. The following suggestions will help parents prepare the portfolio.

Start by using a journal to keep track of what your child does each school day. I find it works best to have one journal per student, so that you can easily separate each child's work at the end of the year. There are many good journals on the market, but you can use a simple notebook. Put the child's name and school year on the cover, and on the inside of the cover, write the names of the main textbooks and their respective publishers. Use the first page to record the name of the homeschool support group and the contact person's name and phone number, as well as any other important numbers you will need throughout the year. It is also a good place to write down those two or three goals you have for the school year.

For each school day, date the page and record specifics, such as "Math: pp 12-13, ex 1-15" and "Read and discussed Chapter 2 of *To Kill a Mockingbird*." Be diligent in filling in this journal regularly, if you are required to keep accurate records. It is also easier to write down while it is still fresh in your mind versus having to reconstruct at the end of the year. Be sure to add field trips as they occur, along with the reason for the trip. The site, address, phone number, contact person, and fee should be included for future reference.

I also recommend that one photo album be kept each year. This should include photos and brochures from the field trips the family takes, as well as to show projects in the process of construction and the final presentations.

A picture showing the proud student beside her science project is a great reminder during the portfolio review time.

Keeping a good representative sample of papers from throughout the year can be an overwhelming task if a storage plan is not implemented early in the year. Two possibilities are a file box and a notebook. The first involves having one file box per child, hanging folders, and tabs for each subject. The student dates each paper as it is completed, thus relieving the parent of one task. Simply file each paper in the correct folder, always placing the most recent paper in the front. At the end of the year, either take the whole file box to the reviewer or choose samples from each folder to present.

The second option is to use a large three-ring binder and store samples of the student's work from the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Be sure to use dividers that are labeled by academic area so that storage can be accomplished quickly.

At the end of the year, a summary for each child should be written that includes the student's full name, address, phone number, birth date and grade. Parents' names are also necessary. A list of academic courses, including what was covered and the main textbooks and their respective grade levels, and special projects should also be added. Write down areas of growth seen in your child as well.

Remember, an organized and complete portfolio presentation helps when you discuss the school year with the reviewer. As we say to our clients, "Relax and enjoy this time of reflection and joy. You have all worked hard this year. We want to enjoy discussing the year with you."

(c) Shirley M. R. Minster 1999

Home Education & Family Services and Royal Academy, Inc. <http://www.homeeducator.com/>

