
WRITING PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT ACROSS A SCHOOL SYSTEM

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Over ten years ago, The East York Board of Education sanctioned the use of writing folders across the system for grades JK to 10. At the request of the Senior Heads of English, the final step was taken about four years ago and Senior Writing portfolios were mandated by the English Subject Council to be used from grades 11 to O.A.C. (Ontario Academic Credit—the college-preparation year). As a result of these decisions, East York's Writing Folders are used in every classroom across the system.

In this session, participants examined multiple draft writing samples, which illustrate

the Writing Folder System. These folders support the writing process goals of our Programme Department by providing printed information for students to guide them in dimensions such as topic choice, revision, editing, proofreading and publishing. Folders also contain quotes, definitions of technical terms, tracking strategies, and reading-writing connections. Separate pockets on each folder provide storage space for writing in various stages of development from semantic webbing of tentative ideas, to ideas in draft stages, to final published copies ready for evaluation.

The structure and organization of the folders change over the grades to match the growing insights and experience of students. Each of the four folders is geared to support the understanding of the user while at the same time supporting overall programme consistency and system goals. Each folder is developed to span four years and reflect writing progress over four grades. When students change grades or schools the writing portfolios travel with them. While folders contain the writing that takes place during the course of any one term or semester, they also capture the highlights of the finest writing from previous grades. This repository of excellence reflects the pattern of individual growth over the years. Teachers receiving new students in September have a ready window on individual writers' capabilities and the kinds of topics, genres, techniques and strategies that students have attempted or mastered in previous grades. Diagnostic evaluation as a fundamental tool of informed teaching is facilitated by this ready reference.

Current research, conducted in various classrooms, is examining revision in greater depth. Teachers have begun to collect drafts that reveal revision at work—thoughts altered, refined, developed as the writer clarifies ideas. Our current research focuses on the difference between surface-structure revision that touches up writing cosmetics and deep-structure revision that improves thought patterns and structure. While the NTNW conference opened the door to this line of thought, the next few years will undoubtedly provide further insights, which may be shared at future conferences.