

Portfolio as one of the tools to assess progress in education

The portfolio concept in education is not a new one. It was used by designers, artists, performers to organize their work and to showcase their skills and talents. The items in the portfolio provide concrete examples of what a person is capable of doing and provide another dimension beyond the written resume or a test of skills.

The portfolio has emerged as one of the more powerful tools for assessment and evaluation in education. Assessment is the process of gathering evidence of what a student can do and evaluation is the process of interpreting the evidence and making decisions based on it. Assessment is a term used to describe real tasks that require students to perform and/or produce knowledge rather than reproduce information others have discovered. This process has become a major focus of school reform. Teachers recognize that standardized tests and traditional paper-and-pencil tests do not always capture what students understand and are capable of doing.

The emphasis today is shifting from standardized tests and traditional multiple-choice tests to alternative forms of assessment that require a 'direct examination of student performance on significant tasks that are relevant to life outside of school'.

Students need to perform a task, demonstrate a skill, show a process, or produce a product that shows what they know and can do rather than take a multiple-choice test that may only measure how well they can memorize or take tests.

A portfolio can be both a container of evidence of a student's skills and a portrait of a student's development through the school year. It is a collection of students' work that exhibits their efforts, progress and participation in selecting contents and evidence of students' self-reflection.

There exists a variety of portfolio types used today. They may be personal, academic, or professional. It is a flexible and valuable tool that can be used for a variety of purposes.