

## **CHAPTER 14**

---

---

# A Classroom Portfolio System

## ASSESSMENT IS INSTRUCTION

*Susan Mandel Glazer*

In Judy Finchler's children's book *Testing Miss Malarkey* (2000), teachers, students, and even parents are preparing for THE TEST. Moms and Dads are giving their children pop quizzes instead of reading bedtime stories. The grown-ups tell the children not to worry, but they act strangely distraught. Miss Malarkey bites her nails for the first time. The principal has made himself personally responsible for making sure that all of the pencils are sharpened "perfectly." The gym teacher is teaching stress-reducing yoga instead of sports. And the cafeteria staff is serving "brain food" for lunch. At the PTA meeting, a man dubbed the Svengali of tests, comes to talk to the parents about THE TEST. He made the test sound so important that the parents' conception of the instrument became exaggerated. An animated drawing illustrates one parent frantically asking, "My son is gifted. . . . Will this test hinder his Ivy League chances? Will the grade point average be reflected in the scores? How will the test affect real estate prices?" And the morning of the test, there were more sick teachers than kids, including the principal, waiting for the nurse. "I hope he [the principal] didn't throw up in the hall," remarked one of the children. My colleagues and I laughed when reading this book. But we also realized that the alarm felt by all in this whimsically written story was truly tragic. Sadly, the fictional story reflects society's obsession with school performance as determined by standardized tests.

### **SOME BACKGROUND ABOUT ASSESSMENT**

Our nation is test crazy. We assess constantly and measure almost everything. We begin at birth by measuring our infants for length, weight, blood type, and other attributes. These measurements are compared to growth patterns of other infants in order to

determine if our baby is near to normal. As our children grow, their developmental patterns are compared to other children as well. We even go so far as to determine toddlers' IQs prior to entering preschool. If intelligent "enough," these children get pushed into academically oriented preschool programs, because some people believe that this kind of a program will help them get a head start in preparation for acceptance into an Ivy League university. "We do this," says Alan Farstrup, executive director of the International Reading Association (personal communication, June 3, 1996), "because we believe that the solution to all our problems is to give more tests." We believe this, despite evidence of no relationship between high-stakes testing and student achievement (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Sacks, 1999).

Unfortunately, test scores have guided the public to form inappropriate perceptions of our nation's schools. Teachers are expected merely to get the students to perform well on the tests, collect the students' work, use formalized equations, graphs, or scales to determine level of achievement, and then submit a score to the persons or agents outside of the classrooms who have directed them to do so. Because the testing tools are selected by outsiders who do not know the children to whom they are administered, the materials are cold, impersonal activities that provide performance results that are generally unrelated to students' daily activities. They are vehicles that teachers are required to use, rather than vehicles that promote both students' and teachers' reflections on performances and transactions in classrooms. Student performances on these tests are consequential because in many cases, they are used to determine school funding and appropriation decisions, and they often determine school promotions and placements. These measurement tools provide the main source of accountability data (usually considered teacher performance) to public stakeholders (Murphy, 1997). The results of such testing are used in school districts and state or provincial education departments to rank and compare schools and children at all levels (Meier, 1994). Students take these tests for the purposes of large-scale educational and program evaluation, not for the purpose of supporting classroom instruction and improving their own learning (Taylor & Watson, 1997). When students' scores do not satisfy the community, the public usually blames the teachers. This focus of blame is due, in my opinion, to the public's lack of knowledge concerning how tests are made, used, and administered. For the most part, the public does not know that the assessment tools, the decisions about the information collected through the testing procedures, and the way the test results are evaluated are all determined by outside authorities. In 1996 Regie Routman asserted that as a consequence of societal beliefs about the importance of testing and test scores, "bashing our public schools is a national pastime" (p. 3). A decade later, most would agree that this statement remains an apt description.

### **WHY, THEN, ARE THESE TESTS STILL FLOURISHING?**

Standardized tests still flourish because 70% of the parent population in the United States believes that promoting students to the next grade should be based on performance on a traditional (i.e., multiple-choice) test (Johnson & Immerwahr, 1994). New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, to bolster his 2006 political campaign, used the issue of student achievement based on testing to facilitate the abolishment of social promotion in grades 3, 5, and 7. One only has to look at *Tests in Print-V* (Burros Institute of

Mental Measurements, 1999) to learn that the numbers of tests available for use in classrooms increases by 300–400 every 5 years. This steady escalation occurs simply because many believe that there is nothing “truer” than a score. Even those of us who believe that tests are unfair evaluation tools choose *not* to find ways to stop those who mandate the use of them.

### **CHANGE, HOWEVER, HAS OCCURRED**

As is evident in chapters throughout this text, in spite of all of these obstacles, there are communities in which great strides have been made to update alternatives to standardized tests. Changes are based on the knowledge that tests ought to complement today’s instructional procedures. In such communities, testing processes are shifting from determining factual knowledge to inquiring about children’s learning, reflective abilities, and engagement. Some testing processes also prompt inquiry into teaching strategies, teachers’ knowledge, and teachers as learners. Many classrooms in schools worldwide have moved from teacher-centered to student-centered management systems. In these classrooms, determining successes daily, rather than periodically for report-card purposes, has become part of classroom curriculum. Portfolios and classroom rubrics, designed by students and teachers together, guide both to make decisions about strengths and needs. Portfolios provide a management system in which data are organized to inform teachers and their students about what students know and what they need to learn. Rubrics provide a way to evaluate or judge the artifacts within the portfolio. Together, these tools provide a viable alternative to traditional testing that also facilitates negotiable discussions between and among teachers and their students. These discussions, too, become part of the evidence base for understanding children’s literacy learning, and the collected evidence, joined with teachers’ professional observations and intuitions, develop into narratives educators use to draw conclusions about children’s growth and learning. Although some may believe that teachers’ observations and intuitions concerning students’ needs are not as valid as “solid data” from tests, one only need listen to a teacher’s story about a child’s life to understand what the youngster is all about. Teachers are experts who know far more about the children they interact with than do test makers. Teachers who are skillful collectors and users of classroom-based evidence organize what they know around principles of teaching and learning and the value systems important in the communities in which their children grow (Braun & Mislavy, 2005).

### **DEVELOPING A PORTFOLIO TO MAXIMIZE STUDENTS’ INDEPENDENT LEARNING**

The portfolio system described in this chapter was developed over a period of 25 years and is still changing. It is a means for managing learning and has become a vehicle of inquiry. The data in each child’s folder permit participants to seek information about each child’s learning needs as well as about the teaching practices that are likely to be most beneficial in meeting those needs. One has only to open these, glance at a product or a collection of products, and use appropriate self-monitoring tools to determine what has been accomplished and what activities need to come next.

The first portfolios used in 1979 in our Center for Reading and Writing at Rider University in New Jersey were very different from those that we use today. We began by asking youngsters, ages 6–16, to collect everything they had produced and put it into their folder. The materials were reviewed once weekly, first in small groups of six children. The purpose was to see what each child had accomplished. These collections became cumbersome because there were no constraints placed on the arrangement of the materials. The approach was one of, “Put them in there and we’ll decide what to do with them later.” Reviewing the data in the portfolio functioned as an alternative grading system, but we determined that this method was not productive or efficient. The teachers were able to use materials and tests scores and make intuitive judgments about children’s growth and needs, but children who needed to find out about their progress had no systematic way to determine what they knew or needed to learn.

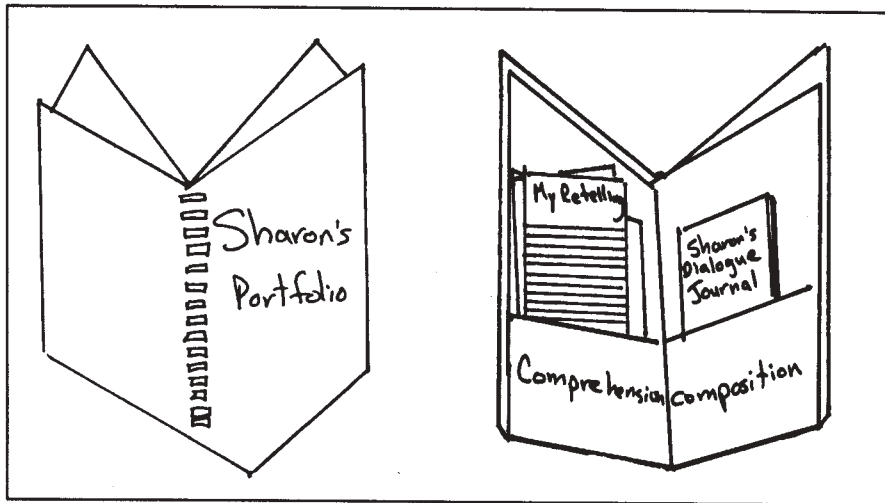
Our focus shifted to one that is grounded in a student-centered approach to portfolios that permits youngsters to make decisions about their strengths and needs. As Gambrell and Ridgeway (Chapter 4, this volume) explain, making choices increases student engagement. In our center, this research comes alive as we consistently observe that making decisions provides the empowerment that lures students to want to make more decisions about their learning processes. Becoming empowered permits them to say, with confidence, “I know this,” and also say, just as confidently, “This is what I need to learn.”

From my years of experience with portfolios, I’ve found that teachers who are about to use them for the first time are concerned with how to organize the materials that go into them, children’s role in using them, and how to use the portfolio when report cards are mandatory. Our system at the Center for Reading and Writing is a deliberate attempt to address each of these concerns. We began with a folder that had four different pieces of colored construction paper enclosed. Students gathered products and sorted them by subject matter behind the designated piece of colored paper. Math products were filed behind the red construction paper, reading and literature behind blue, spelling in back of yellow, and writing behind orange. After several years, these accumulations of papers became unwieldy. Many children at all grade levels would say, “Which one is this color for? I can’t find my blue one! This one goes in two places.” The teachers realized that the questions were caused by an inefficient management system. We recognized that a more functional approach for guiding students to organize and categorize their products was needed in order to guide them to self-monitor their own learning. Several discussions led the teachers to conclude that there needed to be a portfolio (or folder) just for reading and the language arts. Others might also be created for different content area subjects (e.g., math, science). But putting all of the materials together was befuddling for children’s organizational schemes. After 11 years of organizing and reorganizing portfolios, our system emerged in the form of criteria developed by our staff (Figure 14.1).

Our portfolios now are made from two 9” × 11” pocket folders bound together using plastic ringers. One is made for each youngster and one for the teacher. The front of each includes the child’s name, the teacher’s name, and the time period in which it is being used. These folders might be considered a briefcase for organizing, managing, and categorizing products resulting from children’s efforts. They consist of four sections labeled (1) comprehension, (2) composition, (3) word study, and (4) independence. The contents of each section include ongoing work in each of the four categories (see Figure 14.2).

	Check Here
The portfolio guides children to organize materials independently.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The management system promotes an understanding of the purposes for learning to read, write, and understand the study of words.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are assisted in learning to define the purposes of their work by the way materials are arranged in the portfolio.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students are able to identify the skill and category in which their work fits because of the portfolio's organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>
The portfolio acts as an "outline" for guiding children to review their daily activities and progress.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Routine activities are easily accessible so that students can begin, carry out, and complete the activities independently.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students' self-monitoring tools for assessing products coordinate with routine and other literacy activities promoting independent instruction.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Portfolios are easy to handle, retrieve, store, and refer to for information about strengths and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**FIGURE 14.1.** Portfolio elements necessary for effective use.



**FIGURE 14.2.** The portfolio. Reprinted from Glazer (1998). Copyright 1998 by Christopher-Gordon. Reprinted by permission.

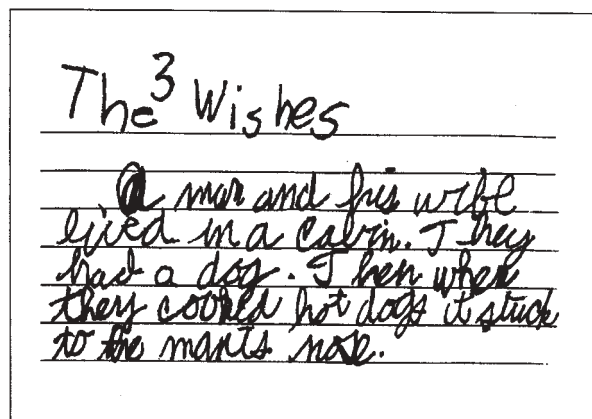
### Comprehension

The first section of our portfolios, originally named *reading*, was renamed *comprehension*. The decision to change the name was based on the realization that anything one reads, sees, views, hears, touches, or tastes must be understood. The section, therefore, includes evidence that students know how to make meaning of text, and that they are metacognitively aware of their behaviors they use. Teachers agree that there must be evidence that students can (1) recall information immediately after reading, (2) make connections between information they've gleaned from current school experiences and information or ideas already in memory, and (3) express and connect feelings and opinions about things they read based on prior experiences (going beyond the text and reflecting).

Work samples include, among others, a reader response journal in which children recall, respond to, and reflect on literature they are reading. There is also a content journal in which youngsters write about things they recall from content-area activities. We have identified several strategies for guiding children to self-monitor their work using these vehicles in their daily routines. I have chosen two to elaborate on here: oral (tape-recorded and transcribed) and written retellings and oral and written responses to reading literature. My descriptions focus on the self-monitoring aspects of the strategy because a major purpose of our portfolios is to guide students to develop self-assessment skills and independence by self-monitoring their products.

Retellings have been validated as an effective strategy for examining students' reading comprehension (Morrow, 1988). Retellings guide students to develop (1) short-term memory skills to help them recall what was read immediately after reading, (2) oral fluency, and (3) word recognition skills for both reading and writing. Retellings are used primarily to guide learners to determine what they know and what they still need to learn. Students are able to determine their needs and observe their growth by reviewing those retellings carried out, past and present.

In Figure 14.3, I present an example of one student's attempt at a written retelling. Kevin retold everything he remembered about the story *The Three Wishes: An Old Story*



**FIGURE 14.3.** Kevin's retelling of *The Three Wishes*. Reprinted from Glazer (1998). Copyright 1998 by Christopher-Gordon. Reprinted by permission.

(Zemach, 1986) immediately after he read it. The 8-year-old began to retell in writing, erased, tried again, erased until the paper was illegible, tried a third time, then put that incomplete attempt in the comprehension section of his folder as well. He knew that he was supposed to save all of his attempts so that he could determine what he could do and where he needed guidance. Kevin finally wrote a summary, not a retelling, which was his fourth attempt. His teacher's observations of his four attempts, collected in the comprehension section of the portfolio, guided her to conclude that handwriting was probably the deterrent hampering his ability to demonstrate recall immediately after reading.

"Kevin," commented his teacher, "I was not fair." "What do you mean?" responded the puzzled child. "Well," she continued, "I asked you to retell the story you read in writing, and I saw that you had a difficult time starting." "Yeah, I did," Kevin remarked. "I remember a lot of things, but I can't write them all down so easy." Kevin was asked to take out his four attempts from the comprehension section and place them on the table. As he fumbled, his teacher, although tempted, stopped herself from taking them out for him. As he looked at her, he commented, "My hands don't work as fast as my mind. That's why I started so many times. See, I finally got it right" (holding up the fourth sheet).

Kevin selected the story *Tikki Tikki Tembo* (Mosel, 1999) as his next story reading. When his teacher saw him take the book from his basket of materials, she moved to his table, bent down next to him, and said, "Hurray for you, Kevin. You selected another book you can read." "Yeah," he responded. "I used the fist-full-of-words trick to pick it. I read one page and only put two fingers up. That means that the book was not too hard." "What's the fist rule?" asked the teacher, guiding Kevin to review this self-monitoring strategy. "Well, you put your hand up, and then you turn to a page in the book. When you read it and miss a word, you put a finger down. If you put five fingers down, you try another page. You try this on five pages, and if you miss five words on each page you put five fingers down. Then you know the book is too hard." As Kevin described the strategy, he turned to the independence section of his portfolio and pulled out a written description of the fist-full-of-words rule that also included an illustration. "See, here it is if I forget it." "Now let's see how well you can retell what you remember," said his teacher. She handed the child a recorder with the play button ready to be pushed. "Go to the listening center and retell the story onto the tape as if you were telling it to a friend who had not read it," she said. The teacher's intuition, based on observations of Kevin's many attempts at writing the story, proved to be a correct assessment. Kevin could retell, almost exactly, what the author had written when he told it orally (see Figure 14.4). His ability to write by hand was his hindrance.

Kevin's teacher transcribed his retelling of *Tikki Tikki Tembo* that evening and brought it into school the next day for Kevin to read. He was astounded when he saw the amount of text he had produced. Because being able to use words orally does not ensure the ability to recognize those words when reading, the teacher suggested that they read it together chorally. This approach provided Kevin with the support he might have needed for word identification. As he read, the teacher softened her voice until she no longer read aloud with him, once she realized that he could read it on his own. His smile indicated his self-satisfaction. After reading his retelling, he remarked, "Gosh, I remembered a lot," a comment that led the teacher to the retelling checklist self-monitoring activity (Figure 14.5). "You're right, Kevin. You *did* remember a lot.

Kevin

This is Tikki Tikki Tembo. It's about a kid who he was born first. This name was Tikki Tikki Tembo and the second child was Chang. The first child had, he was the honest one and the second child was a he had a hard name. One day they were flying a kite and Chang fell into a well. Then Tikki Tikki Tembo went to his mother and father and told her, Chang had fell into the well. "I can't hear you," she said. And then he said it louder. And the his mother said go to the old man who has the ladder. And then they quickly went to get Chang. Um, they had a big celebration after the old man got Chang.

And when Chang and Tikki Tikki Tembo were sitting at the top of the well, Tikki Tikki Tembo tried to unhook the kite and he fell into the well and then Chang got the old man and he got. Chang got his ladder and he waked him up. And they all went to the well and the old man got Tikki Tikki Tembo. Then he was at the bottom so cold and he was sick. And that's the end.

**FIGURE 14.4.** Kevin's transcribed retelling of *Tikki Tikki Tembo*. Reprinted from Glazer (1998). Copyright 1998 by Christopher-Gordon. Reprinted by permission.

And you now know that you remember the most when you retell orally." "Yep," he confirmed. "I can talk it fast, but writing is ttttttooooooo slow." Next the teacher explained, "This retelling checklist will show you what you remembered, Kevin. Watch." She took a bookmark and placed it under the first category of "Setting" and read the first entry: "I began my retelling with an introduction." Kevin's face indicated that he was not quite sure what he was supposed to do. The teacher did not turn the statement into a question, for she knew that doing so might confuse him. She reread the statement and said, "Read the introduction to your retelling, Kevin." The child moved to the transcription and read aloud, "This is Tikki Tikki Tembo." He paused and then said, "I don't have one." "What do you mean, you don't have one?" asked the teacher. "Well, an introduction is a beginning—you know, like once upon a time. I don't have that." "So you just discovered that you did not include an introduction." "Uh-huh," said Kevin sheepishly. "That's terrific," continued the teacher. Kevin's sheepish expres-



STUDENT'S COMPOSITION AND RETELLING CHECKLIST	
NAME <u>Kevin Jordan</u>	DATE <u>7/22</u>
NAME OF COMPOSITION OR BOOK <u>Gipki's Upjigens</u>	
AUTHOR <u>Arlene Mose</u>	
<b>SETTING:</b>	YES NO
I began my composition/retelling with an INTRODUCTION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I told WHEN the story happened	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I told WHERE the story happened	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>CHARACTERS:</b>	
I told about the main character	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I told about the other characters	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>PROBLEM:</b>	
I told about the story problem or goal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>EPISODES:</b>	
I included episodes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>SOLUTION:</b>	
I told how the problem was solved or the goal was met	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
I told how the story ended	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>THEME:</b>	
My story has a theme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
When I compose/retell on my own, I include: <u>when, where, main and other characters, problem, episodes, solution, theme.</u>	
The next time I compose/retell, I need to remember to include these things: <u>introduction</u>	
_____	
_____	

**FIGURE 14.5.** Kevin's retelling checklist. Reprinted from Glazer (1998). Copyright 1998 by Christopher-Gordon. Reprinted by permission.

sion disappeared. "But I forgot it," he said, with some dismay. "You self-monitored your own work, Kevin. You checked it yourself. That's terrific. You know that you did not include an introduction. So what will you check, yes or no?" Kevin looked at the teacher who kept a neutral face. When he realized that it was up to him to make the decision, he checked "No." "Hurray for you, Kevin," said his teacher. You know that you did not include an introduction." And this is how the rest of the session continued. When Kevin reached the bottom of the sheet and read, "When I retell on my own, I include," he had no difficulty completing the sentence. Then he concluded, "All I have to do is to look at the checks and then I know what to write."

After two or three 5- to 7-minute sessions with each child, about half of this teacher's class was able to use the self-monitoring sheet independently. One youngster made a brilliant discovery. He came to me one day and said, "Dr. Glazer, I just cheated, but don't tell my teacher." "I'd love to know what you did, if you want to share it,"

I replied. "Well," continued 7-year-old Gary, "If you put the retelling sheet by the computer, you can write a story all in one piece." "How do you know that?" I asked, assuming that the child knew exactly the correct reason for his actions. "Well, I began my story with an introduction, and just like that, you know that you should write 'once upon a time,' and there's the introduction." "And then," I continued. "And then you go to the next one," Gary said. "I told where the story happened, and I wrote it happened in the swimming pool. So I wrote 'Once upon a time it happened in a swimming pool.'" Gary continued to read his story, moving back and forth with his finger, pointing to the statement on the retelling check sheet and the line or sentence in his story.

Kevin's four tries at writing his retelling were placed behind his oral transcription, which was followed by the retelling checklist. These were stapled together and positioned in the comprehension section of Kevin's portfolio. When he was asked why it went in this section, he responded, "Because it is reading stuff, and it's what I remembered." "You're right. Good readers tell what they read right after they read so they can remember it for a long time." "And," Kevin replied, "I did it best when I talked it into the tape recorder." "You sure did," responded the teacher. "You know that retelling orally is the best way for you to show how much you remember. Good for you!"

### **Composition**

The assessment of composition has been a source of consternation for educators for years. Much of the alarm stems from the fact that defining writing has been controversial. When assessment goes beyond sentence construction and mechanics to include quality of ideas, organization, tone, and audience awareness, teachers often become anxious. This response is expected, because determining how well a person writes is often a subjective endeavor. Expectations and experiences of the teachers who guide children are different and therefore their guidelines for determining the products that reflect growth are also different.

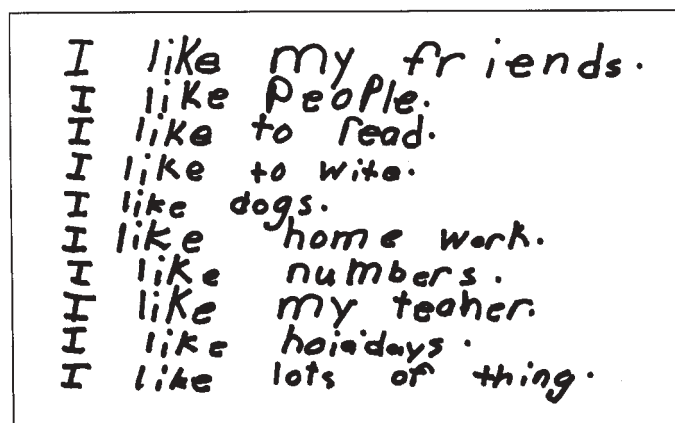
Since the 1970s, however, writing instruction and assessment have reflected the notion that writing, like oral language, is developmental (Clay, 1975, Glazer & Searfoss, 1988; Glazer & Brown, 1993). Vygotsky noted, "as the child gains proficiency, task demands are raised until the child is functioning independently and the teacher functions as a supportive observer" (1962, p. 101). In other words, no amount of direct instruction can hasten the process. However, we know that environment, social interactions, modeling, and instruction facilitate growth (Glazer & Brown, 1993). Mechanics, spelling, punctuation, and handwriting, once the primary focus of writing instruction, are left until the end of a writing project. Students in classrooms from kindergarten through graduate school are writing and rewriting text and discussing these activities. Instruction focuses on guiding processes rather than the products themselves.

Portfolios are well suited to the self-assessment of the processes that produce written products, and they were initially used in classrooms for this purpose. A systematic portfolio that helps to determine growth in writing, however, has been challenging to create. With teachers, I have developed more than 20 tools that students are able to use to self-monitor their own writing. They range from tools that determine how the mechanical aspects of writing are used (spelling, punctuation, handwriting, when appropriate) to guides that assist students to understand the effectiveness of their writing. Space permits me to share only one of these: the About My Writing sheet.

Children need to know about their writing. They learn to write by knowing how they construct their text—and, therefore, how to change it. Seven-year-old Samantha wrote stories, lots of stories. Her sentences were all subject–verb–object constructions, typical of young or new writers. Pointing this pattern out to her may have made her cognizant of how she constructed the text, but providing her with a tool to discover this in her own writing was more effective. Samantha and her teacher sat down next to each other with a copy of her story (Figure 14.6), and the “About My Writing” self-monitoring sheet (Figure 14.7). As is the routine, the child knew to place the index card under the first sentence. “I am writing fiction,” she read, and quickly said “No,” as she wrote it in the appropriate column on the chart. After several sentences, the teacher left her to complete the self-monitoring of her writing independently. Following lunch, Samantha came to her teacher with her revised paper (Figure 14.8) and remarked enthusiastically, “Mrs. Shapiro, I just wrote the longest sentence in the whole world!” “Wow, I’d love to see it if you want to share it with me.” “Sure,” responded Samantha, as she proudly placed the paper on her teacher’s lap. “See, it has 46 words!” The child did, indeed, write one very long sentence. Although it is only a series of simple sentences connected with the conjunction *and*, the construction was deliberate. Samantha was able to use her original piece of writing and with the guidance of the self-monitoring tool was able to alter sentence constructions intentionally.

### Word Study

Word study is just that, the study of words. How words are created, their derivations, roots, and origins, and how language has changed through the centuries are all part of the fascination that makes learning about our language inviting. Spelling is also part of the study of words. For many children, American English spellings appear unique and are often frustrating. The word *enough*, for example, is often spelled ENUFF by children, and logically so. The double *f* at the end of the word, rather than the *gh*, makes sense from a sound–symbol point of view. (See Templeton, Bear, and Madura, Chapter



**FIGURE 14.6.** Samantha’s first draft. Reprinted from Glazer (1998). Copyright 1998 by Christopher-Gordon. Reprinted by permission.

About My Writing	
	Comments
I am writing fiction.	No
I am writing nonfiction.	Yes
I get Ideas for writing from _____.	Books
I am writing a story.	No
I use pictures to help tell about my writing.	No
I am writing an autobiography.	Yes
I begin sentences the same way.	Yes
I begin sentences differently.	No
I write "and" a lot in my compositions.	No
I write short sentences.	Yes
I write long sentences.	No
I use different words when I write.	No
I write best by hand.	No
I write best with a computer.	Yes
I write best when I dictate to someone.	Yes
Name: <u>Samantha</u> Date: <u>11-20</u>	

**FIGURE 14.7.** "About My Writing" checklist. Reprinted from Glazer (1998). Copyright 1998 by Christopher-Gordon. Reprinted by permission.

I like my friends  
and I like people  
and I like to read and  
I like to write and  
I like dogs and I like  
home work and I like  
numbers and I like  
my teacher and I like  
holidays and I like  
lots of things.

Samantha Delorenzo

**FIGURE 14.8.** Samantha's revised writing. Reprinted from Glazer (1998). Copyright 1998 by Christopher-Gordon. Reprinted by permission.

8, this volume, for a more detailed discussion of the patterns in English spelling.) To help teachers and students examine and understand spelling needs, I developed a spelling trend assessment that is categorized in our portfolios in the section titled “word study.” Our work with one student, Teresa, provides a window into this particular assessment tool.

Eleven-year-old Teresa was directed to read through her science report to find misspelled words. She found one, looked up at her teacher for a nod of approval, and then circled the word. “You were able to discover that you misspelled the word, Teresa,” her teacher noted. The child hung her head sheepishly, indicating that she was either embarrassed or even fearful of consequences. “Teresa, it is really wonderful that you are able to find your spelling mistakes,” commented her teacher. “That means you are a good detective of your writing.” The child’s surprised look at the compliment for discovering an error reminded us that we need to consistently and explicitly commend students for their use of self-checking and error-detection activities.

I encourage teachers to guide children to notice their spellings only after they have completed, and are satisfied with, the contents of their writing. After they’ve written several drafts, they are asked to read the first line of their composition and circle all of the words that they believe are misspelled. Then they are guided to write each of those words in the first column of the “My Spelling” sheet (Figure 14.9). They are then directed to read the rest of their writing and circle words they believe are misspelled and write these in the first column of the spelling sheet, as well. The second column is the “first try” one. Youngsters are asked to try and write and then try again. If that doesn’t work, they are guided to get the correct spelling from a friend, the dictionary, or their teacher. The important part of this self-monitoring tool is for them to notice the differences between their spellings and the correct version. This exercise helps teachers identify the degree of knowledge children have regarding the spellings of the English language. It also helps us determine how much students know about how our language works. Jason noticed that he confuses *ir* and *ur*. “That’s logical,” commented his teacher. “They sound exactly the same, even though they are spelled differently.” The teacher then took this as an opportunity to teach the *ir-ur-er* spelling rule, which informs children that all three endings sound the same. It was a relevant lesson for Jason because in order to share his story, the words needed to be spelled correctly.

## **Independence**

A regular routine of recording one’s own progress is rarely carried out in many classrooms. This is unfortunate, because self-assessment is a review process that provides youngsters with a special confidence that may not be achieved when teachers determine progress. Youngsters experience power in discovering what they know; there is even more command of self-capabilities when youngsters are able to determine what they need to learn (or what they don’t know). We have developed a daily progress report form at our center that is used by both teachers and their students for making decisions about where instruction is needed (Figure 14.10). After 20 or so minutes of teacher guidance, children are able to determine their own strengths and needs using their portfolio data, and they record their findings on the progress report form.

## My Spelling

My Spelling	Try Again	Real Spelling	What's Different?
english	English	Enghish	I need a small e and made it a capital.
wrot	wrot	wrote	I switched the o and r. I forgot the silent e.
interisting	interesting	interesting	I wrote is for es. I also wrote us instead of is.
writing	writing	writing	I forgot the double consonant rule.
soker	soker	soccer	I messed up alot.
hir	her	her	I mix up ir and er a lot of times.

My name: Jason Date: October 13, 2015

These spelling words came from my dialog journal

FIGURE 14.9. "My Spelling" sheet.

### Progress Report Form

Your Name: Sanathya Kev Today's Date: 6/28/04  
 Your Teacher's Name: Laura Your Age: 9

What I Can Do	What I Need	My Teacher's Job
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can add more details</li> <li>• reread</li> <li>• work together to figure out the main idea</li> <li>• look for details so they can help us put the story in order.</li> <li>• look for connections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- add a ending</li> <li>- introduction to get the reader excited</li> <li>- a middle which include a lot of details.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- help us learn how to include introduction, middle, and ending</li> </ul>

241

FIGURE 14.10. Progress report form.

We begin self-assessment activities at the completion of a lesson, at the end of a specific time segment, at the end of the morning, afternoon, or the day. In this example, 9-year-old Jonathan was able to review his activities all at once. After he worked on a story that he had been writing, he was able to complete his progress report form for that activity independently. The amount of work reviewed depends upon the student's ability to handle one or more of the events experienced during the school day. Jonathan sat with his teacher in a 10-minute conference for a first review. His teacher took out her portfolio and turned to the section labeled *Composition*. Jonathan followed and did the same without need for verbal directions. "Jonathan," said his teacher, "You did a lot today." "Yeah," replied the child, "I sure did!" "Take out the story that you're writing." Jonathan immediately searched the section of his folder labeled *composition* and pulled out his story. "This is your second draft," his teacher commented. "Yep," replied Jonathan, nodding his head affirmatively. He also took out the "Student's Composition and Retelling Checklist" which he had used earlier to determine what he had included in the story and what he still needed in order to finish it. "So," began the teacher, "what did you learn about your story writing?" "Um," he began, pointing to the first item on his progress report form, "I write with a lot of details." "How do you know that?" his teacher asked. "Well, on this sheet (*pointing to the composition checklist*) it told me that I had a lot of episodes and that means I had a lot of details." "Good for you," remarked his teacher. "You are able to use the story composition checklist to discover what you can do. All right, now, what do you need to add to your story?" "That's easy," remarked the youngster. "I need to add an ending." "How do you know that?" asked his teacher. "Here," pointing to the composition checklist. "I saw 'I told how the story ended,' and didn't do it, so I didn't check it and that's how I found out." "And then you wrote 'add an ending' here" (*pointing to the first item under the "What I Need" section of the progress report form*). "Yep," responded the child, and the discussion continued.

The young man completed his progress report form self-assessment sheet and filed it in the appropriate place in the Independence section of his portfolio. "It goes here," he commented, "because I wrote it myself, and it's about what I did today."

The type of activity we used with Jonathan is important because it helps students develop self-assessment routines as they complete each task. But we also want students to reflect more generally so that they gain an overall understanding of themselves as readers. I illustrate this point with an example from Morgan, age 11, who is considered by all of the people in his life to be a fine reader. He is achieving as expected and in some areas of language arts, even better than most sixth graders. The responses on his "Good Reader" sheet (Figure 14.11), the first piece of data in our children's portfolios, indicate that he understands something about the reading process. He knows, for example, that in order to clarify ideas, he must read the material at least more than once. He also knows that he must be able to recognize and understand the meanings of words in order to comprehend successfully. Rereading helps not only to recognize words but also to guide readers to see if there is more than one meaning to a specific word (or phrase) in the sentence. Still his response concerning his ability to read was ambiguous. He said, "I am an OK reader but I do not comprehend very well." Although this is not the case, the youngster diminished his reading competence. We found that 93% of 1,500 youngsters ages 6–17 we served in the center "sat on a fence" when asked to identify their abilities as readers. Responses include:



## Good Reader Sheet

Activity 1.

Name some things good readers do when they read.

If they do not understand something they are reading they go back and reread it.

Name some things poor readers do when they read.

They sometimes do not read the exact words that are not in the book. If they do not understand something they do not go back and reread it.

What kind of reader are you?

I am a ok reader but I do not comprehend very well.

Name: Morgan Age: 11 Date: 6/25/05

FIGURE 14.11. "Good Reader" sheet.

- "I'm not good, just a little good." (age 6)
- "I'm a reader that makes mistakes and don't know how to say the words right." (age 9)
- "I think that I'm half way in between a good reader and a poor reader because I think about the vocabulary words and make sure I understand what the character is feeling and thinking. But I also don't ask about the book, and I don't understand the book, but I still keep reading. I also don't learn anything from some books that I read." (age 11)

Important to children's successes is their perceptions of themselves as readers and writers. We know that personal expectations can affect their performance. Students need to have knowledge about themselves as writers. We use several strategies, such as the one shown above, to assist children in discovering what they will share about themselves and their literacy skills. Morgan's statement, "I think I am pretty good but I can

do better," could indicate that he may not be sure of his writing ability, but more than likely, he's hedging his bet. In a follow-up discussion to this response, Morgan's teacher asked, "Tell me, Morgan, what about your reading could be better?" The child paused for a moment and responded, "I don't know." "Then," his teacher asked, "why did you say you could do better?" Morgan shrugged his shoulders, indicating that he probably does not know or is cautious about sharing his reasons.

The new classroom environment may have caused him to "size up" the situation before sharing his ideas about his writing. Being modest, that is, not admitting to gold-star status, is influenced by our U.S. (and other) culture, which guides us to think of sharing assets as immodest or disrespectful. This 11-year-old, in his new school setting, was probably intuitively aware of this unwritten rule and the fact that to contradict a teacher's opinion concerning his ability could hurt his classroom standing. His second sentence, "The most problem I have is that I repeat words over too many times" informs us that this child has had this aspect of his writing pointed out to him many times.

### **A REVIEW OF OUR CLASSROOM PORTFOLIOS**

The portfolio described in these pages serves as a management tool that guides children to know what to do when they come to class. They are able to secure their materials, get to work, and continue without guidance from their teachers. The folders are organized so that youngsters are able to categorize their work with understanding, which also enhances learning and the recall of information. The portfolio is also a productive tool for illustrating growth over time. Children are able to compare their first contributions in the routine activities daily, weekly, or monthly. Monitoring growth using the many self-assessment sheets allows each to discuss strengths and needs. For the teachers in our center, portfolios provide a guiding document that helps children identify what they know and what they need to learn. Each child manages his or her own portfolio, organizes it, uses it independently, and keeps it with his or her materials all the time. What better way to convince children that it's *their* work and *their* actions that facilitate learning.

### **REFERENCES**

- Amrein, A. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2002). *The impact of high-stakes tests on student academic performance: An analysis of NAEP results in states with high-stakes tests and ACT, SAT, and AP test results in states with high school graduation exams*. Tempe, Arizona State University, Education Policy Studies Laboratory. Available at [www.greatlakescenter.org/research.html](http://www.greatlakescenter.org/research.html).
- Braun, J. I., & Mislevy, R. (2005). Intuitive test theory. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 86, 489-497.
- Burros Institute of Mental Measurements. (1999). *Tests in print V: An index to tests, test reviews and the literature on specific tests*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Clay, M. (1975). *What did I write?* Auckland, New Zealand: Heinemann.
- Glazer, S. M. (1998). *Assessment IS instruction: Reading, writing, spelling and phonics for all learners*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

- Glazer, S. M., & Brown, C. S. (Eds.). (1993). *Portfolios and beyond: Collaborative assessment in reading and writing*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Glazer, S. M., & Searfoss, L. W. (1988). *Reading diagnosis and instruction: A C.A.L.M. approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Johnson, J., & Immerwahr, J. (1994). *First things first: What Americans expect from public schools*. New York: Public Agenda.
- Meier, T. (1994). Why standardized tests are bad. In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner, & B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and social justice* (pp. 171–175). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Morrow, L. M. (1988). Retelling stories as a diagnostic tool. In S. M. Glazer, L. W. Searfoss, & L. M. Gentile (Eds.), *Reexamining reading diagnosis: New trends and procedures* (pp. 128–149). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Murphy, S. (1997). Literacy assessment and the politics of identity. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 13, 261–278.
- Routman, R. (1996). *Literacy at the crossroads: Critical talk about reading, writing, and other teaching dilemmas*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Sacks, P. (1999). *Standardized minds: The high price of America's testing culture and what we can do to change it*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Taylor, K., & Watson, S. (1997). Co-opting standardized tests in the service of learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 79, 66–70.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- Finchler, J. (2000). *Testing Miss Malarkey*. New York: Walker.
- Mosel, A. (1999). *Tikki Tikki Tembo*. New York: Scholastic.
- Zemach, M. (1986). *The three wishes: An old story*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.