1995

Authentic Assessment: How Do Portfolios Fit the Picture?

Pamela Bryan Bagley
University of North Florida

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT:

HOW DO PORTFOLIOS FIT THE PICTURE?

by

Pamela Bryan Bagley

A thesis submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

May, 1995

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The thesis of Pamela Bryan Bagley is approved: (Date)

Signature Deleted

5-5-95

Signature Deleted

Signature Deleted

8/17/95

Committee Chairperson

Accepted for the Department:

Signature Deleted

8/18/95

Chairperson

Accepted for the College:

Signature Deleted

8/28/95

Dean

Accepted for the University:

Signature Deleted

Dean of Graduate Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in response to the growing need for an alternative to traditional assessment instruments in schools. Standardized tests no longer adequately measure a student's knowledge. Curriculum and teaching methods continue to change, and educators are demanding an assessment method which reflects not only what, but how, a student learns. In response to America 2000, a national plan for school improvement, several states have already adopted more "authentic" methods of assessment, portfolio evaluation being one of the more common. The Florida Department of Education is currently considering various alternative assessment methods, and the implementation of a state portfolio program seems imminent. This project was designed to help those educators who are unfamiliar with the concept of portfolio assessment to implement a successful program. First, on the basis of a thorough review of the literature, concerns associated with portfolio assessment were identified. Then, specific strategies for addressing these issues were recommended, in order to offer a design for a manageable portfolio program.

Chapter One: Introduction

Effective communication is a principal focus of the middle school language arts curriculum. In order to guide the design of such a program, the Florida Department of Education has formulated a listing of student performance objectives. These include comprehending and evaluating reading selections, identifying basic literary elements, using the various stages of the writing process, writing for a variety of purposes, and using standard written English. Also included are objectives governing other communication skills such as oral presentation, effective listening, and critical thinking.

In many models of traditional instruction, teaching is followed by administration of some form of basic skills test. Such a test is comprised primarily of a number of multiple choice questions concerning grammar, reading comprehension, and isolated vocabulary and spelling words. Performance on this instrument is then used to evaluate the student, the teacher, and even the curriculum itself. However, the basic skills test measures only a small part of the instruction required by the state of Florida.

Educators are beginning to voice their concerns over this apparent discrepancy between instruction and evaluation in the language arts classroom, and Florida is making an effort to implement assessment reform. In 1992, the state initiated a timed-writing examination entitled Florida Writes. A student has forty-five minutes in which to formulate a written response to a pre-determined expository or persuasive prompt. The writing sample is then mailed to independent evaluators who score the piece holistically on a scale of one to six.

Although Florida Writes allows students to demonstrate their knowledge of grammar, spelling, and vocabulary in context, the examination does have its limitations. One problem is that the test only evaluates writing ability; it does not measure any of the other forms of communication taught in the classroom. In addition, the time constraints

imposed for formulating the response force the student to bypass the various stages of the writing process; further, since the topics are pre-determined, the student has no opportunity to demonstrate his ability to write for various purposes.

Florida continues to seek more accurate assessment tools, however. As the Florida Department of Education begins to implement Blueprint 2000, a plan for state-wide school improvement, one of the components targeted for reform is assessment. The Department of Education acknowledges that current assessment practices cannot adequately measure the performance outcomes required by the plan. In fact, "schools are encouraged to develop instructional strategies and assessments that go beyond the assessments listed (High School Competency Test, Florida Writing Assessment, Grade Ten Assessment Test, and district norm-referenced tests) to measure any of the standards or outcomes" (p. 18). One possible alternative is portfolio assessment, part of a project being contracted by the Florida Department of Education through the University of Florida. Portfolio assessment is tentatively scheduled for implementation in the 1995-1996 school year (Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability, 1994). Because this is a rather new field, however, many educators are not familiar with the processes involved in using portfolio assessment as an evaluation tool.

This project has two purposes. The focus is first on identifying possible problems and concerns based on a thorough review of the literature concerning the issue of portfolio assessment. Then, strategies for the efficient design and implementation of portfolio assessment in the middle school language arts classroom will be recommended. These recommendations will be shared with selected colleagues who will respond by completing a checklist evaluating the professional efficacy of the design. As a result of this study, the researcher hopes that there will be increased interest in portfolio assessment as a more viable alternative to traditional evaluation in the language arts classroom.

Definitions

Analytic Assessment: A method of language arts assessment in which a particular aspect of an essay, such as mechanics or organization, is evaluated.

Basic Skills Test: A method of assessment designed to test objectively the acquisition of knowledge considered minimal for students of a particular grade level.

Holistic Assessment: A method of language arts assessment in which all aspects of an essay are considered in evaluation.

Portfolio: A collection of samples of a student's work which reflects the skills and growth of the student.

Portfolio Assessment: A method of language arts assessment which uses students' portfolios to measure progress.

Rubrics: Standards used in scoring portfolios. Rubrics are examples of differing levels of performance.

Standardized Test: A method of assessment which objectively measures student achievement.

Writing Process: The stages a writer goes through to complete a piece. These stages include prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

Educational reform is rapidly changing the language arts classroom. In many school districts, whole language programs have replaced exclusive reliance on the basal reader. In others, the process of writing has become as important as the product. Multidisciplinary teaching units attempt to connect various courses to each other as well as to the outside world.

Unfortunately, assessment reform has not kept pace with curricular and instructional change. Standardized tests are still the norm by which both teacher and student success is measured. However, many educators are attempting to change the situation. Several states, Florida among them, have devised a timed-writing sample with which to evaluate writing progress. Other school systems now use computer programs to evaluate as well as to instruct (Brown, 1989). More teachers are now grading writing holistically, rather than analytically. Although these methods are an improvement over traditional assessment, they are still far from perfect.

There is one evaluation tool, however, which many educators feel can accurately measure the student's learning progress in the "new" language arts classroom: the portfolio. The idea of portfolio assessment is relatively new, but the plan is rapidly gaining popularity in the educational field. In fact, it has been identified by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development as one of the top three curricular trends of the decade (Vavrus, 1990). As researchers examine schools currently using the portfolio approach, they seek answers to several basic questions:

1. What is portfolio assessment?
2. What constitutes a portfolio?
3. What are the effects of portfolio assessment?
4. What are the possible problems with portfolio assessment and how can

they be overcome? and

5. What does the future hold for portfolio assessment?

Although fairly new in the field of education, the portfolio has long been used by artists, models, journalists, and architects to display samples of their work for prospective employers. The portfolio employed for student assessment in the language arts program is similar. Portfolios in education first gained wide recognition in 1985 when the Rockefeller Foundation provided funds for a consortium incorporating the efforts of Project Zero at Harvard, the Educational Testing Service, and the Pittsburgh Public Schools to develop an alternative method of assessment. PROPEL, as the consortium came to be known, conducted extensive research in an attempt to find an alternative method of assessment. This group sought a model which would assess not only the products of a humanities curriculum but the processes as well. They wanted an evaluation tool which tested students' abilities and at the same time forced students to accept personal responsibility for their learning through questioning and reflection. Their findings resulted in the creation of a portfolio evaluation system (Gomez, Graue, & Bloch, 1991; Wolf, 1989).

The Vermont Department of Education was also a pioneer of the portfolio evaluation system. When teachers were asked in 1988 to create a workable assessment plan with which to evaluate the state's writing program, they devised a form of portfolio assessment. In 1992, Vermont implemented the portfolio assessment program statewide in fourth and eighth grades, with plans to expand the program to other grades (Abruscato, 1993).

While there is no single definition for a portfolio, Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991) define it as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the students' efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas" (p. 60). Researchers, however, remind readers that the portfolio itself and portfolio assessment are two distinct entities. The portfolio is simply a tool used in the assessment process (Cramer, 1993; DeFina, 1992).

Because the type of material collected is dependent on the purpose of the portfolio, defining the purpose must necessarily be one of the first steps of a portfolio assessment program. A portfolio may be used as a statewide assessment tool, as a diagnostic tool or exit measure, or as an evaluation of the language arts program itself (Bernhardt, 1992). It may replace other assessment methods or it may be used in conjunction with them (Cramer, 1993; Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991). The collection contained therein may be cross-curricular or limited to student work in a particular subject area (Bernhardt, 1992; Vavrus, 1990). The portfolio may encompass a single teaching unit, a grading period, a school year, or an entire school career (Cramer, 1993; Bernhardt, 1992). The samples may be evaluated by the classroom teacher for assessing learning, by the administrator for accountability purposes, or by the student for determining individual growth and setting goals (Cramer, 1993).

Once the purpose for the portfolio is determined, criteria for the selection of pieces may be established. Most educators agree that students should have the primary responsibility for choosing the samples to be included in the portfolio (DeFina, 1992; Tierney, 1992; Krest, 1990; Valencia, 1990). Others, like Cramer (1993) and Bernhardt (1992), feel that teachers should also choose one or two pieces to add to the student's collection, especially if the teacher or the program is to be evaluated with the portfolio, as well. Buschman (1993) warns, however, that all teacher selections should be clearly labeled as such.

All portfolios should include a sample of what the student considers his/her best work. Beyond that, the collections of pieces are as varied as the classrooms from which they come. Teachers, often with student input, devise a checklist of the items to be included in the portfolio. Such a list typically reflects the goals of the language arts program (Cooper & Brown, 1992; Valencia, 1990). Items to be incorporated may include a process piece which demonstrates all stages of the writing process; a collection of essays, each written for a different audience or purpose; a creative writing sample; and a piece written for a

course other than language arts (Cooper & Brown, 1992; Houston, 1992). Some educators may wish to include such items as results from standardized or teacher-made tests, worksheets, and attitude surveys (Cramer, 1993; DeFina, 1992). Cooper and Brown (1992) also suggest the inclusion of two timed-writing samples, one from the beginning of the school year and one from the end. Other teachers recommend adding videotapes or photographs of student performances or three-dimensional creations, audiotapes of oral presentations or reading, and computer disks of writing samples (Bruder, 1993; Cramer, 1993; Tierney et al., 1991).

The number of samples also varies from teacher to teacher. The total is dependent, in part, on the amount of time the portfolio represents. A portfolio which is evaluated only at the end of a semester or school year will necessarily include more pieces than one which is assessed at the end of each teaching unit. In addition, a selected sample occasionally satisfies more than one of the listed requirements, in which case one student's portfolio may contain fewer pieces than that of another. Buschman (1993) asks each of his students to submit one piece each Friday which meets a particular criterion presented on Monday of that week, such as the most difficult, the most interesting, or the longest piece written. Wolf (1989), on the other hand, requires only three samples: the most satisfying piece, the least satisfying piece, and a reflection piece explaining why the least satisfying piece was unsatisfactory and what, if anything, could be done to improve it. The practice of most teachers falls somewhere in between these two extremes, with the norm for most educators including six to eight pieces per grading period (Tierney, 1992; Krest, 1990).

Once the specified number and kinds of pieces have been selected for the portfolio, the student must create several documents to complete it. These assignments should be the only ones in which the student is asked to write specifically for the portfolio. As Cooper and Brown (1992) remind us, one of the tenets of any authentic assessment, including portfolio assessment, is that the assessment is part of instruction. A table of contents which demonstrates the organization of the portfolio, whether chronological, by genre, or

by some other method, is essential. The checklist used in the selection of the samples can often be easily adapted in constructing a table of contents (Cooper & Brown, 1992). Next, the student must compose a reflection piece to add to the portfolio. This piece could be an essay, a response to a questionnaire, or a checklist, depending on the student's ability. This reflection may serve as the rationale for including a single writing sample in the collection or for the portfolio as a whole. It enables the student to explain why particular pieces were chosen and the processes the writer employed in its creation (Cooper & Brown, 1992; Tierney, 1992). This process of questioning and reflection is instructive as well as evaluative.

Teachers who also use portfolios to evaluate reading progress require several additional items. Portfolios in Cora Five's classroom (1993), for example, include a genre chart to track the kinds of books the student is reading, a reading log to list the titles and authors of the books read, and copies of entries from reading response journals to document reading growth. Again, self-evaluation is an important component. Students are asked to evaluate the books they have read and to reflect on the progress they have made as readers.

Most educators (Buschman, 1993; Five, 1993; Hebert, 1992; Houston, 1992) follow the student's compilation of the portfolio with a teacher/student conference. Several items are discussed during the brief conference. The portfolio pieces are examined, then compared to earlier work in order to judge progress. The student and teacher then determine a grade for the portfolio. Before the conference concludes, most researchers recommend that the student set two to three goals to be met during the next grading period. These goals may be objectives from the language arts curriculum such as trying a new genre or practicing a particular grammar skill. These goals, as well as notes from the conference and other classroom observations, might also be included in the portfolio as aids in the evaluation process (Buschman, 1993; Valencia, 1990).

Wolf (1989) warns that "portfolios are messy. They demand intimate and often frighteningly subjective talk with students. Portfolios are work" (p. 37). Yet more and more schools are advocating the switch from traditional evaluation to portfolio assessment. What exactly are the advantages of portfolios that make this method worth the extra effort? Advocates of the portfolio process agree that one of the most beneficial aspects of the program is that it places the responsibility for learning where it belongs, with the student (Frazier & Paulson, 1992; Wolf, 1989). Each student must first set specific learning goals. At a later, predetermined date, the student will provide samples of work to serve as evidence that these objectives have been achieved. Then the student and teacher work together to arrive at a grade which accurately represents the student's achievement. There are no surprises. No longer do students feel that the teacher has arbitrarily assigned grades based on some mysterious criteria (Lamme & Hysmith, 1991).

The close relationship established between the teacher and student as they discuss selected samples and determine grades is yet another benefit of portfolio assessment. The teacher becomes the student's partner, not an enemy (Valencia, 1990). This change in relationship, as well as the fact that the assessment has become a part of regular classroom instruction, tends to relieve the anxiety caused by traditional evaluation instruments (Kritt, 1993). As teachers learn more about their students from reading portfolio pieces and conferencing, they become even more successful at motivating them to write.

Another advantage of portfolio assessment is that it more closely resembles the methods used to teach writing. Most language arts teachers stress that the process of writing is as important as the finished product. Students create a work over a period of time, during which they revise and polish in much the same way that adults approach tasks in real life. Teachers normally supervise each step of the writing process and offer constructive feedback as necessary. Portfolios, indicating not only what students write, but how they did it, are a record of this writing process.

Portfolio assessment parallels life in other ways as well. As students reflect on their writing and share their efforts with others, they realize that most problems have more than one solution. Like adults, they attempt various methods until they find the one which is most satisfactory. In addition, students discover that no task is ever really finished. Because portfolios do not "disappear" once they are graded, students are able to return to earlier pieces with a new understanding. They can then apply their newly acquired knowledge to revise once more (Wolf, LeMahieu, & Eresh, 1992).

Teachers as well as students benefit from the portfolio process, however. A portfolio designed to assess students' language arts skills may also indicate strengths or weaknesses in the language arts program itself. After noticing the lack of poetry in student portfolios, for example, teachers in one school realized that they were including only a limited amount of poetry in their curriculum, and that that was offered near the end of the school year (Houston, 1992). When Larry Buschman (1993) noticed that his students were using such vague terms as "nice paper" and "needs improvement" in peer editing sessions, he realized that he needed to model more specific comments in order to equip students with the terminology necessary for evaluation. If several students repeatedly include in their portfolios writing samples fraught with errors, the teacher might wisely conclude that further instruction in revising and editing techniques is necessary.

Portfolio assessment impacts the curriculum in other ways as well. Preparing the portfolio is simply an extension of the instruction; therefore, teachers no longer have to sacrifice valuable classroom time to prepare students for a standardized test. Because students are evaluated over material which they have learned in a manner similar to that in which they have been taught, teachers are free to use innovative teaching methods. Good teaching need no longer be sacrificed to improve poor test scores (Simmons, 1990).

Teachers also applaud the portfolio's flexibility. It can be easily adapted to various subject areas, teaching styles, and ability levels. For instance, lower-ability students may receive a portfolio grade based on the quantity of work included in order to encourage

them in much-needed practice. The quality of the work might be emphasized instead for upper level students (Krest, 1990). A cross-curricular portfolio is an excellent tool for connecting the various disciplines. It encourages teachers from all fields to make writing assignments to be included in the portfolio, further emphasizing to students that writing is an important activity (Bernhardt, 1992).

Although the benefits of portfolio assessment are evident, there are still several issues to be addressed. Like all new educational strategies, the survival of portfolio assessment as an alternative to traditional evaluation depends largely on its acceptance by administrators, teachers, parents, and students. One of the major concerns for teachers seems to be the vast amount of time involved, and Gomez et al (1991) agree it is a labor intensive task. Moss et al. (1992) suggest allowing thirty minutes or more to evaluate a portfolio of six to seven pieces. Additional time is required for observation, preparation, conferencing, and teacher reflection.

There are ways to make the task easier, however. Tierney (1992) suggests setting up a schedule for collecting samples, so that this procedure is not so frequent as to force students to spend the majority of their classroom time organizing portfolios. Limiting the number of samples collected also lessens the workload. Another possibility is to follow a rotating schedule for evaluating portfolios. Assessing three or four portfolios each day will enable most teachers to review everyone's work on a monthly basis (DeFina, 1992). Student conferences and observations can be conducted on a revolving schedule as well. Writing observations made during the course of the class period on labels which can later be attached students' portfolios is another time-saver (Grady, 1992; Hemmer & Goyins, 1992). A new hand-held computer scanner equipped with special software such as The Grady Profile can also be used to record teacher observations made during regular classroom activities (Grady, 1992; Hetterscheidt, Pott, Russell, & Tchang, 1992).

Some teachers feel that portfolios ease their grading chores (Goerss, 1993; Krest, 1990). Grading only the pieces selected by students for their portfolios lowers the number

of papers which must be read. Furthermore, requiring that each piece selected show evidence of all steps of the writing process, including revision and editing, ensures that fewer corrections will be necessary (Krest, 1990).

Even with the use of effective time management techniques, many teachers find it difficult to arrive at a portfolio grade. Although the quality of the samples is of the utmost importance, quantity is also an important consideration. In order to become proficient writers, students must practice. It is difficult to motivate them to do so, however, if they know their efforts receive no recognition. The solutions to the grading dilemma are as varied as the educators who use portfolio assessment. Krest (1990) gives two portfolio grades: one for the quantity of work in the folder, which allows credit for practice, and one for the best finished piece, which encourages quality. Rief (1990) assesses students on their level of achievement on the goals set at the previous conference. Still others suggest that the portfolios be used only to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and remain ungraded (Courts & McInerney, 1993; Moss et al., 1992; Tierney et al., 1991).

Assigning grades to portfolios is easier if rubrics are designed prior to initiating the portfolio process. The more detailed the rubrics, the simpler the task of grading will be (Pate & McGinnis, 1993). Teachers at Brown Barge Middle School chose seven criteria by which students would be evaluated: organization, detail, focus, diction, sentence, structure, and mechanics. Each criterion was then defined and a rating scale was established. Student writing samples were measured against the scale for each criterion, and a total score was compiled (Pilcher, 1991). Vermont uses similar rubrics with which to measure portfolio pieces in its statewide assessment program (Abruscato, 1993). Recent studies, however, indicate that Vermont's rubrics need to be even more detailed to ensure reliability in scoring (Viadero, 1993).

Space management is as much a problem for some educators as are time management and assigning grades. Portfolios may be compiled and placed in any imaginable container, from cereal boxes to construction paper folders. However, when filled with student work,

these can become unwieldy. Because portfolio assessment is a relatively new area, there are few models to follow. Researchers agree, however, that it is most important that the portfolios be accessible to students (Grady, 1992; Tierney, 1992; Valencia, 1990). Portfolios might be stored in an empty filing cabinet, placed in cardboard boxes, or, as in Chris Cassidy's classroom, hanging from strings across the back wall of the room (Tierney, 1992).

Once teachers are convinced that portfolios can be managed, administrators, parents, and students themselves must be persuaded of their effectiveness. The major obstacle to acceptance by administrators and parents seems to be the lack of comparative statistics generated by portfolio assessment. Administrators have long used the scores from traditional assessment measures as an indication of how well their students, and teachers, were doing in comparison to others in the nation. Parents, when surveyed, affirmed that one of the primary things they wanted to know about their child's achievement was how it compared to that of other students (Tinsley, 1993). Requiring specific pieces of all students in a specific grade, although it standardizes the portfolio somewhat, is one way of allowing such comparisons. Encouraging parents to participate in the portfolio process, whether by allowing them to choose one of the samples or asking them for written comments to be included in the folder, can also foster their acceptance of portfolio evaluation (Buschman, 1993; Goerss, 1993; Tierney, 1992). Such measures, along with time and education, can help to overcome these negative mindsets.

Students seem to accept the portfolio concept readily. Although they may initially encounter problems in keeping track of their work, students tend to thrive on the added responsibility and decision-making involved in portfolio assessment (Goerss, 1993). A typical student response recorded at the conclusion of a year of portfolio assessment was, "I feel more at ease and more relaxed which in turn helps me to write better" (Ballard, 1992).

Even with widespread acceptance, however, portfolio evaluation's usefulness is questionable unless its reliability and validity can be established. This task is rather difficult to achieve because portfolios have only recently come into use. However, some researchers have begun to investigate the process. A research team led by Jay Simmons (1990) field-tested a portfolio assessment model in New Hampshire. Twenty-seven fifth grade students were randomly selected for participation. Both portfolio pieces and timed-writing samples were holistically scored by the raters. The portfolio grades of average and above average students tended to reflect their scores on the timed-writing measures. Students who scored poorly on the timed-writing assessments performed much better on portfolio evaluations, however. The researchers concluded that placing time constraints on the writers served little purpose and that the results of portfolio assessment are valid.

Until more research can be done, portfolio practitioners are implementing several measures in an attempt to ensure validity and reliability. Setting consistent instructional standards and including writing samples as evidence of attaining those goals increase the reliability of the portfolio as an assessment tool. Valencia (1990) suggests that two forms of evidence be presented: required and supporting. Certain samples required by the teacher can be used as proof that students have met state educational objectives for that grade level. These samples enable administrators to compare the progress of all students in that grade. The supporting evidence consists of unrestricted student-choice selections which assure a variety of work in the portfolio and provide a better idea of a student's individual progress. Bernhardt (1992) cautions that a collection of work is necessary for validity; basing a score on a single piece, although that piece is scored holistically, is not advisable.

Reliability in scoring rests primarily with the evaluators. Portfolio readers need proper training in order to score portfolios consistently. In some schools, teachers "cross-read" portfolios. Practitioners choose four portfolios from their classrooms, an example for each level on the rating scale. One or more teachers then evaluate these portfolios and the

scores are compared to those given by the regular classroom teacher. If the ratings are similar, the teacher is assumed to be a reliable reader. The same process can be accomplished with teachers from other districts, or with independent audit committees, scoring the portfolios for comparison (Wolfe et al., 1992).

In summary, portfolio assessment has begun to receive widespread attention as a means of authentic evaluation in the language arts classroom. The Video Journal of Education (Videotape, 1992) defines a portfolio as "initially a collection, which over time is reduced to a selection, which then becomes a reflection of the learner. The power is in the reflective process." Portfolios are as varied as the teachers who use them. The contents of the portfolio, the methods and criteria for choosing samples, and the organization of the folder itself differ from classroom to classroom. The advantages of portfolio assessment are evident, however. Portfolios can easily be adapted to every ability level so that all students can be successful; such adaptation relieves anxiety and raises students' self-esteem. Students begin to take an active part in learning and evaluating as they are forced to assume responsibility for their grades. Teachers also benefit from portfolio assessment as the collection indicates the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum.

There are inherent problems in the use of portfolios as assessment tools, however. The process takes a great deal of time and space. Teachers must be trained in the implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of portfolio assessment. Students, parents, and administrators have to be convinced of the effectiveness of the program, and the reliability and validity of portfolio assessment have yet to be ascertained. Although many questions about portfolio assessment remain unanswered at present, a review of the available literature indicates that portfolio assessment is generally viewed as a positive experience for all involved.

Chapter Three: Procedures

There are serious problems with current language arts assessment in the middle school. The primary method of assessment is still the traditional standardized test. This instrument is ineffective for several reasons. First, implicit in the title of the tests, is the notion that the instruments evaluate all students alike and make no allowances for individual differences. Because these tests are necessarily limited to objective items, they assess achievement rather than process. However, the primary fault found with standardized testing is that it does not reflect current classroom practice. Although portfolio assessment addresses and alleviates most of these concerns, it creates its own unique problems. Among them are problems concerning managing time and space as well as grading the portfolio and insuring validity for evaluations.

The purpose of this study is to identify these concerns, offer possible solutions, and devise a manageable plan for portfolio assessment. In order to answer the questions posed in Chapter One, the researcher first reviewed the literature addressing performance measurement, particularly portfolio assessment. Based upon the literature survey, the researcher decided to design a manageable program.

This program is designed for use with middle school language arts students of all ability levels. It includes recommendations for addressing portfolio management with reference to design, including the selection process and methods of storage. Strategies for implementing the assessment program include introducing the process to students and parents; teaching students to respond to writing, both their own and that of their peers; and conferencing with students about their choices. In addition, the project includes recommendations for grading the portfolio. These include proposals for designing scoring criteria, creating rubrics, and encouraging quantity while maintaining quality.

These materials will be evaluated by three middle school language arts teachers using a checklist provided by the researcher (See Appendix A). The checklist is comprised of questions which reflect the concerns which surfaced in the review of the literature. Based upon these responses, the researcher will refine materials, as necessary, to improve their utility. The revised set of recommendations are intended for use by interested groups, to enhance their skills in using portfolio evaluation.

Chapter Four: Results of Procedures

One purpose of this study was to identify possible problems with the use of the portfolio as an assessment tool in the middle school language arts classroom. After a thorough review of the literature, concerns about management, implementation, and evaluation of such an assessment program were evident. The project then focused on designing a manageable program for portfolio assessment by providing strategies for dealing with these concerns. What follows is a statement of what such a design should include.

Obviously the design of the portfolio evaluation plays a primary role in the success or failure of the program. One of the first steps in creating a portfolio plan is to determine the purpose of the portfolio. Many portfolio proponents feel that portfolios should be left ungraded and used only to determine individual student growth (Courts & McInerney, 1963; Moss et al., 1992; Tierney et al., 1991). Unfortunately, most middle school students do not yet have the intrinsic motivation necessary to perform a task successfully without credit. In addition, few states allow educators to replace traditional standardized testing with portfolio assessment as a means of measuring student gains. It is not surprising, therefore, that the portfolio designed to reflect only individual academic growth is viewed simply as additional paperwork by many classroom teachers.

Most educators seem to prefer portfolio systems designed to measure student achievement and to document progress toward meeting certain specified objectives. These objectives should be carefully chosen based on classroom textbook overviews and current state mandates. For example, Florida's Student Performance Standards dictate that eighth graders should use all stages of the writing process, should write in response to literature, should prepare summaries, should narrate personal experiences, and should write for a variety of other purposes. In addition, students are expected to demonstrate

knowledge of vocabulary skills and standard written English. Of course, it would be impossible to cover all of these concepts adequately in a single grading period. However, portfolio objectives may be prepared for the entire school year to ensure compliance with all standards, then grouped by grading periods. This organization would alleviate the risk of overwhelming the students if, as Cooper and Brown (1992) suggest, they are given copies of the objectives as they are introduced to the portfolio concept.

Once objectives are selected, standards for meeting each objective should be defined, and rubrics for grading the pieces should be selected. There are many such standards and rubrics already in existence. Some educators may choose to apply the ones which accompany the class language arts textbook or those used in assessing the state writing examination. Other teachers may elect to create their own (See Appendix B). As with the objectives, it might be helpful to share these standards with the students as examples of what is expected of them.

Because few teachers assign a single piece of writing when introducing a specific genre, setting portfolio requirements does not eliminate the element of student choice. The student still has to select the work which best demonstrates knowledge of the concept. Although many practitioners suggest waiting until the end of the grading period to select all pieces of work (Cramer, 1993; Bernhardt, 1992), it may be easier for middle school students to make this decision at the conclusion of each teaching unit. Students can review all the pieces they have written in a particular genre and select the one which they feel most effectively meets the objective of the unit. After completing and attaching a selection slip (See Appendix C) all pieces selected, the work should be placed in the portfolio. Changes can be made as the student continues to acquire knowledge and to rework pieces. At the close of the grading period, students may review their choices and substitute pieces as necessary.

The frequency of teacher review will determine to some extent the selection of writing pieces. The more often the portfolio is reviewed, the fewer will be the pieces of work

available for selection. At least one of the pieces included in the portfolio should show evidence of the writing process in order to satisfy the objective which dictates that students should use all stages of the writing process. Students might also have an opportunity to submit creative writing samples, possibly in the form of a narrative or as a response to literature. Some form of student reflection should also be submitted. The selection slips attached to the selections can serve as student reflections on individual pieces, or they can be used as the foundation of a reflection on the portfolio as a whole and on the student's growth as a writer. A table of contents should then be designed for the portfolio. This listing of portfolio sections can simply be an adaptation of the objectives given to the students at the beginning of the assessment process (Cooper & Brown, 1992).

Composition assignments may serve as evidence of reading and writing skills such as vocabulary development, reading comprehension, response to literature, mechanics, and the writing process required to satisfy most of the portfolio objectives. However, the language arts also include speaking and listening skills, which will have been reflected in the objectives created earlier in the design. It is possible to provide evidence of the mastery of these skills in the portfolio. Videotapes or audiotapes of oral presentations can easily demonstrate the student's ability to prepare and deliver a speech (Bruder, 1993; Cramer, 1993; Tierney et al., 1991). Another method which might be used to evaluate both oral presentation and listening ability skills is the use of the peer critique. Given a simple checklist (See Appendix D), each student in the classroom evaluates a particular oral presentation and then writes a short critique. The speaker could include one or more of the critiques as evidence of success. In addition, listeners could add to their portfolios a copy of one of their critiques in order to satisfy the requirement of listening to and evaluating an oral presentation.

Because most portfolios are used for evaluative purposes, decisions must also be made as to the weight and frequency of grading. Using the portfolio as the single method of

grading can be difficult. Students are forced to wait until the end of the grading period to know their status, and teachers who fail to review the portfolio regularly may not realize that certain students are failing until it is too late to help them. Instead, portfolios might be evaluated frequently with the scores counting as a percentage of the grade, possibly one-third to one-half. For those on a six-weeks' grading system, the conclusion of the grading period should be sufficient for assessing the portfolio. For those programs of nine or twelve weeks, it might be better to evaluate at the mid-point as well as at the end of the grading period.

Since students need to review, re-evaluate, and rewrite their work frequently, they must have unlimited access to their portfolios. Some educators place the responsibility solely on the students and require that they keep their work in a notebook to be brought to class each day. Krest (1990) allows selected pieces to be checked out and carried home, but she never permits the entire portfolio to be removed from the room. However, since the portfolio represents such a large percentage of the student's work, many teachers devise a policy prohibiting the removal of the portfolio from the classroom.

If any or all of the portfolio is to remain in the classroom, storage must be provided. The amount of space necessary is dictated by the form of the portfolio. Some teachers favor cereal boxes or paper bags as containers so that three dimensional projects can be included. Unfortunately, such suggestions are simply not feasible for a middle school teacher of well over one hundred students. Instead, most middle school practitioners use folders to house the portfolio contents. Although expandable file folders with several sections are ideal, student-made construction paper folders work equally well. Many teachers ask students to prepare several folders: one for finished work, one for work in progress, and one for work to be forwarded to the next year's teacher. These folders can then be stored in file cabinets or cardboard boxes.

Although teachers voice concern over the amount of time necessary to store and distribute the portfolios, much of the confusion attendant upon these activities could be

eliminated. Middle school students are mature enough to keep their works-in-progress portfolios in their notebooks. Normally, therefore, a student will need to visit the stored portfolio only when a piece is selected to meet the objective of a particular unit and a selection slip is completed, or at the conclusion of the grading period when the portfolio must be reviewed for final submission. At those times when students must remove the portfolio from storage, the task may be shortened if the teacher boxes the folders in alphabetical order rather than by class period. This will disperse the students to one of many boxes rather than having thirty students waiting for access to a single box. The process can be further facilitated by using colored folders or tabs to distinguish the classes within each box.

After the design of the portfolio process is complete, the teacher must introduce students and their parents to the concept. There are several ways of presenting the concept of portfolio assessment. Professionals from the community such as journalists, artists, or architects may be invited to visit the classroom and share their portfolios. They should describe not only the content of their work, but also the reasons they selected each piece. The teacher may also compile a portfolio of work for an author recently studied by the class. After presenting the portfolio to the students, the teacher should explain how each item reflects the author's style (Tierney, 1992).

Once students understand what constitutes a portfolio, they should be presented with the objectives and grading criteria to be used in evaluating their portfolios. However, most students will need practice in the "language" of evaluation before they understand exactly what is expected of them. During the academic year, educators have many opportunities to model such language, through both written evaluations and student portfolio conferences.

A more immediate way of providing the necessary instruction in the language of evaluation, however, is to simply supply rubrics, or examples, of various levels of papers. The teacher might go one step further by allowing students to "discover" their own

rubrics. After students arrange their desks in a circle, each student receives a copy of a sample essay. Using the scoring criteria, each student reads and rates the essay. Scores are then compared and analyzed. Students are soon able to distinguish between work which is exemplary, merely acceptable, or clearly deficient. An example of each rating level might then be placed in each student's folder for future comparison.

The simplest way to acquaint parents with the portfolio process is to send a letter home (See Appendix E). This communication should include the basics of the design, along with an explanation of how and how often the portfolio will be evaluated. To further increase parental support of portfolio assessment, the teacher might encourage parents to help in the selection process or plan a time when parents may visit the classroom to view the finished portfolios (Buschman, 1993; Goerss, 1993; Tierney, 1992).

Even though the portfolio program has been carefully planned and presented, the evaluation of the portfolio itself is often a source of difficulty. If student work is graded as it is assigned and then placed in the folder, the portfolio simply becomes a storage receptacle. Students will invariably choose as their final submissions those pieces which have received the highest grades. Such a process does not promote reflection, which some supporters feel is one of the chief strengths of the program (Cooper & Brown, 1992; Tierney, 1992). Also, because all the pieces have been previously evaluated, the portfolio grade becomes meaningless. Yet many students will not complete assignments if they realize that only a selected few pieces will be assessed.

Krest (1990) solves this dilemma by assigning a portfolio grade which encompasses both quantity and quality. A percentage of the grade is based simply on the number of assignments which the student has completed. This procedure allows the student, knowing that not all work will be the subject of an evaluator's close scrutiny, to experiment and grow as a writer. The remainder of the grade is determined by the score attained on an essay chosen by the student. The percentages given for quantity and quality are established according to the teacher's preference and the student's ability. A larger

percentage of the portfolio grade may be reserved for quantity with lower-ability students, who need considerable writing practice. The teacher may wish to encourage ideas and in-depth revision with more advanced students by weighting the essay as the largest portion of the portfolio grade.

However, evaluating a single piece does not provide the variety essential to assessing the student's achievement (Bernhardt, 1992; De Fino, 1992), nor does it serve as evidence that all objectives have been met. Instead, employing a checklist which includes all the pieces assigned during the grading period, the teacher can assign a grade based on the number of assignments completed. Next, using the portfolio objectives, the teacher should review the pieces the student has earlier selected to meet the criteria and grade the student's performance. If this process is repeated every four to six weeks, there should be no more than two or three pieces of work to assess in each portfolio.

Before the final portfolio grades have been determined, the teacher may conduct individual student conferences. This process allows students further opportunity to explain the strengths of their portfolios, and the teacher the opportunity to voice any questions or concerns that have surfaced upon review of the work. Teacher and student then work together to determine an appropriate grade for the current portfolio and to discuss possible goals or improvements for the next one. Since time is limited, it is best to have ready a list of questions for the student. In addition, the student may also prepare a list of concerns to discuss with the teacher.

One time-saving alternative to the student conference is the questionnaire (See Appendix F). In addition to answering the teacher's concerns, students argue persuasively for the portfolio grades which they feel they deserve. The document then becomes a part of the portfolio and is given consideration before a final portfolio grade is assigned. Such an instrument can be extremely helpful to middle school language arts teachers because of the large number of students they teach.

Portfolio assessment is not easy, but it is possible. An effective design includes strategies for selecting and storing pieces, educating students and parents, and evaluating the finished portfolio. Careful planning will alleviate many of the problems commonly associated with portfolios and ensure the success of the program. Time and experience should take care of the rest. According to Valencia (1990), however, "the real value of a portfolio does not lie in its physical appearance, location, or organization; rather it is in the mindset that it instills in students and teachers" (p. 340).

Chapter Five: Summary and Recommendations

The first focus of this study was to identify possible problems associated with portfolio assessment on the basis of a comprehensive review of the literature. Once these concerns were identified, a manageable portfolio assessment program was designed. Next an evaluation instrument (See Appendix A) was designed to assess the feasibility of such a program. Three language arts teachers, one from each of the middle school grades in a given school, were asked to review and evaluate the program.

The results of this review were consistent with the research. A common concern of the three teachers was the vast amount of time they felt would be needed to evaluate portfolios. The educators feared they would be assessing the work from an entire grading period at a single sitting. Their fears were allayed, however, by the recommendation that students choose only two or three selections for close evaluation. If anything, the paper load will be lessened using portfolio assessment, yet students will be allowed the writing practice they are often denied because teachers do not have time to score the work.

One of the evaluators of the study had earlier attempted to implement a portfolio assessment system in her classroom with little success. Unsure of how to evaluate the resulting portfolios, she spent a large amount of time reassessing previously graded pieces. By the end of the school year, she resorted to simply averaging the scores on the papers stored in the portfolio. Realizing that her method of portfolio evaluation was only adding another step to an already heavy workload, she finally abandoned the program altogether. She plans to make another attempt at portfolio assessment next year, however, incorporating Krest's (1990) suggestion for a dual portfolio grade which recognizes both quantity and quality.

The evaluators felt that the portfolio design of this project answered many of their concerns and that it was both a manageable and effective assessment system. Their added recommendation was that principals schedule several duty-free days at the conclusion of each grading period so that teachers could conduct student conferences and evaluate

portfolios. These days might simply be the usual planning days at the end of the nine weeks which are cleared of required meetings and workshops, or they may require substitute teachers to manage the classroom for a day or so.

The teachers who evaluated the portfolio program presented here agree that, as curriculum and instruction continue to change, traditional assessment is no longer effective. They see portfolio assessment as a viable alternative and found the information to be helpful in creating programs of their own. The willingness of the evaluators to attempt portfolio assessment, once they realized that many of their earlier concerns were unjustified, is a clear indication that extensive instruction is necessary if teachers are to successfully implement such a program. As the Florida Department of Education continues to explore various forms of authentic assessment, efforts such as this will become even more important. Once alternatives to traditional assessment are selected, longitudinal studies to assess the effects of the new programs will also be required.

APPENDIX A: INSTRUMENT FOR EVALUATION OF PORTFOLIO STRATEGIES

Teacher _____ Grade level taught _____

1. Do you presently use portfolios in your classroom?
   ___a. no
   ___b. yes

IF YOU CHECKED NO, PLEASE CONTINUE.
IF YOU CHECKED YES, SKIP TO THE NEXT PAGE.

2. If no, why not?
   ___a. lack of information
   ___b. lack of time
   ___c. lack of storage space
   ___d. lack of student cooperation
   ___e. lack of parent approval
   ___f. other_____

3. If you were to begin portfolio assessment in your classroom, which of the following do you foresee as the primary problem?
   ___a. time
   ___b. space
   ___c. student cooperation
   ___d. parental approval
   ___e. evaluation of the portfolio
   ___f. other_____

4. Do you feel that any of the strategies presented in the article would be useful to you if you were to begin portfolio assessment in your classroom? If so, which ones?

   _____

   _____

5. Do you have suggestions for other strategies or do you have other concerns which you feel should be addressed? If so, what are they?

   _____

   _____

2. If yes, what is the purpose of the portfolio?
   ___a. to determine student growth
   ___b. to evaluate student performance
   ___c. to assess the success of the curriculum
   ___d. other _____

3. If yes, what is the most difficult problem you have encountered with portfolio assessment?
   ___a. the time required
   ___b. storage
   ___c. student cooperation
   ___d. parental approval
   ___e. evaluation
   ___f. other_____

4. Do you feel that any of the strategies suggested in the article might help you alleviate the problems you indicated above? If so, which ones?

   _____

   _____

5. Have you successfully used any of the strategies suggested in the article? If so, which ones?

   _____

   _____

6. Have you unsuccessfully tried any of the strategies suggested in the article? If so, which ones?

   _____

   _____

7. Please share any other strategies which you have successfully implemented that might help the beginning portfolio teacher.

   _____

   _____

In scoring, consider . . .	PURPOSE the student's ability to present and maintain a unifying focus and sense of audience.	ORGANIZATION the student's ability to present ideas in an effective order from beginning to end.	DETAILS the student's ability to include specific, vivid details which support the main idea of the piece.	VOICE the student's ability to reflect personal expression and use language appropriate for the audience and purpose.	CONVENTIONS the student's ability to demonstrate correct usage, mechanics, and grammar skills.
1 SUPERIOR	This selection is exemplary. The purpose is clear and is maintained throughout the piece. Ideas are well developed and organized effectively. There is both an introduction and a conclusion. Transitions are evident. There is a distinctive voice and evidence of creative, effective language. There are few errors.				
2 GOOD	This selection is good. The purpose is obvious. Ideas are adequately developed, but there are occasional lapses in organization. There is both an introduction and a conclusion. Transitions are evident. There are indications of voice, though the language may not be particularly creative. There are some errors.				
3 FAIR	This selection is fair. The purpose is evident, but is not consistently maintained. Ideas are underdeveloped and repetitious. Organization is not consistent. Transitions are rarely used. The introduction and/or conclusion are brief and ineffective. There is little evidence of voice and the language is limited and vague. There are frequent errors.				
4 POOR	This selection is poor. There is no clear purpose. Ideas are not developed, and there is no pattern of organization. The introduction and/or conclusion are missing. Transitions are not evident. There is no evidence of voice, and language is limited and inappropriate. There are serious errors.				
NS Non-Scorable	Either no attempt was made to complete the assignment, or the attempt was illegible or incoherent.				

APPENDIX C: SELECTION SLIP FOR PORTFOLIO SELECTIONS

Date work was completed: _____

Name of student: _____

Type of assignment: _____

Title of assignment: _____

I chose to include this piece because _____

_____

_____

_____

I would like to share with you the following things about this assignment: _____

_____

_____

_____

I could have improved this piece by: _____

_____

_____

_____

Student signature: _____

Teacher comments: _____

_____

_____

Teacher signature: _____

APPENDIX D: PEER EVALUATION OF ORAL PRESENTATION

Speaker's Name_____

Topic/Title of Speech_____

Evaluator's Name_____

Circle 1, 2, 3, or 4 to show how well the speaker did the following things:

1= Never 2=Sometimes 3=Often 4=Always

1. The speaker mentioned the purpose of the speech early in the presentation.	1 2 3 4
2. The information was presented in a logical order which the audience could easily follow.	1 2 3 4
3. The speaker supported points with details, examples, or facts.	1 2 3 4
4. It was obvious that the speaker had gathered information for the speech carefully and accurately.	1 2 3 4
5. The information was presented in an interesting manner.	1 2 3 4
6. The speaker pronounced words clearly and correctly.	1 2 3 4
7. The speaker kept eye contact with the audience.	1 2 3 4
8. The speaker stood straight and used appropriate body language.	1 2 3 4
9. The speaker used some type of media or visual aid in the presentation.	1 2 3 4
10. The speech fell within the specified time limits.	1 2 3 4

APPENDIX E: PARENT INFORMATION LETTER

Date _____

Dear _____,
Parents' names

This year your child will be participating in an exciting new experience. _____ will be putting together a collection of work to create a portfolio. Although the contents of the portfolio will be different each nine weeks, the work will always be things that your child has selected as the best pieces from several assignments. I will collect the portfolios for grading at the middle and the end of each nine weeks. Two grades will be given on the portfolio: one for the number of pieces completed and another for the quality of the pieces selected. Together these grades will count as _____ of your child's language arts grade.

Please call me if you have any questions, or if you would like to know more about portfolio assessment. I am looking forward to working with you to make this _____'s most exciting school year ever.

Sincerely,

_____
Teacher's name

APPENDIX F: STUDENT PORTFOLIO RESPONSE

Answer each of the following questions as completely and as honestly as possible.

1. How many of the assigned pieces of writing are included in your portfolio?

2. Did you include a table of contents and organize your portfolio accordingly?

3. List the different types of writing which are included in your portfolio.

4. Did you select an example of each of the required pieces of writing for your portfolio?

5. Does each required selection have a selection slip?

6. With which of the required selections are you most satisfied? Why?

7. With which of the required selections are you least satisfied? Why?

8. Give an example of one way in which you have improved as a writer during this grading period.

9. What grade do you think you deserve on your portfolio? Why?

References

Abruscato, J. (1993). Early results and tentative implications from the Vermont portfolio project. Phi Delta Kappan, 74, 474-7.

Ballard, L. (1992). Portfolios and self-assessment. English Journal, 81(2), 46-48.

Bernhardt, S. A. (1992). Teaching English: Portfolio evaluation. Clearing House, 65(6), 333-34.

Brown, R. (1989). Testing and thoughtfulness. Educational Leadership, 46(7), 31-33.

Bruder, I. (1993). Alternative assessment: Putting technology to the test. Electronic Learning, 12(4), 22-29.

Buschman, L. (1993). Taking an integrated approach. Learning '93, 21(5), 22-25.

Cooper, W., & Brown, B. J. (1992). Using portfolios to empower student writers. English Journal, 81 (2), 40-45.

Courts, P. L., & McInerney, K. H. (1993). Assessment in higher education: Politics, pedagogy, and portfolios. Westport: Praeger.

Cramer, S. R. (1993). Navigating the assessment maze with portfolios. Clearing House, 67(2), 72-74.

DeFina, A. A. (1992). Portfolio assessment: Getting started. New York: Scholastic.

Five, C. (1993). Tracking writing and reading progress. Learning '93, 21(6), 48-50.

Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability. (1994). Transition system: Companion to blueprint 2000. Tallahassee: Florida Department of Education.

Frazier, D., & Paulson, F. L. (1992). How portfolios motivate reluctant writers. Educational Leadership, 49(8), 62-65.

Gomez, M. L., Graue, M. E., & Bloch, M. N. (1991). Reassessing portfolio assessment: Rhetoric and reality. Language Arts, 68, 620-628.

Goerss, K. V. (1993). Portfolio assessment: A work in process. Middle School Journal, 25(2), 20-24.

Grady, E. (1992). The portfolio approach to assessment. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Hebert, E. A. (1992). Portfolios invite reflection from students and staff. Educational Leadership, 49(8), 58-61.

Hemmer, E., & Goyins, T. (1992). Portfolio, please! Instructor, 101(8), 49.

Hetterscheidt, J., Pott, L., Russell, K., & Tchang, J. (1992). Using the computer as a reading portfolio. Educational Leadership, 49(8), 73.

Houston, N. (1992). Writing evaluation: Picture of a portfolio. Instructor, 101(7), 28-29.

Krest, M. (1990). Adapting the portfolio to meet student needs. English Journal, 79(2), 29-34.

Kritt, D. (1993). Authenticity, reflection, and self-evaluation in alternative assessment. Middle School Journal, 25(2), 43-45.

Lamme, L. L., & Hysmith, C. (1991). One school's adventure into portfolio assessment. Language Arts, 68, 629-640.

Moss, P. A., Beck, J. S., Ebbs, C., Matson, B., Muchmore, J., Steele, D., & Taylor, C. (1992). Portfolios, accountability, and an interpretive approach to validity. Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 11(3), 12-21.

Pate, P. E., Homestead, E., & McGinnis, K. (1993). Designing rubrics for authentic assessment. Middle School Journal, 25(2), 25-27.

Paulson, F. L., Paulson, P. R., & Meyer, C. A. (1991). What makes a portfolio a portfolio? Educational Leadership, 48(5), 60-63.

Pilcher, J. K. (1993). Characteristics of alternative assessment procedures used in

an interdisciplinary middle school curriculum. Middle School Journal, 25(2) 58-60.

Rief, L. (1990). Finding the value in evaluation: Self-assessment in a middle school classroom. Educational Leadership, 47(6), 24-29.

Simmons, J. (1990). Portfolios as large-scale assessment. Language Arts, 67, 262-67.

Tierney, R. J. (1992). Setting a new agenda for assessment. Learning '92, 21(2), 62-64.

Tierney, R. J., Carter, M., & Desai, L. E. (1991). Portfolio assessment in the reading-writing classroom. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon Publishers.

Tinsley, C. (1993). Putting first things first: Changing our assessment practices. Middle School Journal, 25(2), 51-54.

Valencia, S. (1990). A portfolio approach to classroom reading assessment: The whys, whats, and hows. The Reading Teacher, 44, 338-40.

Vavrus, L. (1990). Put portfolios to the test. Instructor, 100(1), 48-53.

Viadero, D. (1993, November 10). RAND urges overhaul in Vt.'s pioneering writing test. Education Week, pp. 1, 18.

Video Journal of Education. (1992). Reflections of learning (Videotape, Vol. III, n. 4).

Wolfe, D. P. (1989). Portfolio assessment: Sampling student work. Educational Leadership, 46(7), 35-39.

Wolfe, D.P., LeMahieu, P. G., & Eresh, J. (1992). Evaluating middle schoolers effectively. Education Digest, 58(2), 13-17.

Vita

Pamela Bagley was born in Douglas, Georgia. She received her B.S. Degree in Education from the University of Valdosta, Valdosta, Georgia, in 1978. That same year, she began her teaching career in Pearson, Georgia, where she was the eleventh-grade English instructor and drama sponsor. She and her family moved to Macclenny, Florida, in 1988, and she has been employed with the Baker County School District since that time. Mrs. Bagley has spent several years teaching at-risk students at the middle school level. She is currently an eighth-grade language arts teacher and yearbook sponsor at Baker County Middle School.