

1999


Writing portfolios in a resource room

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Allensworth, Marcquelyn S., "Writing portfolios in a resource room" (1999). *Graduate Research Papers*. 266.

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Abstract

Much attention has been given to the issue of assessing students' writing. The trend to view writing as a process has prompted educators to use qualitative assessment techniques to describe children's writing progress and instructional needs. The writing portfolio, one qualitative technique, provides an ongoing assessment that can be used throughout the year and extended throughout the school career of the child. In portfolio development, students can be actively involved in reflecting on their approach to the writing process and can, in collaboration with the teacher, set goals for future learning. Therefore, this type of assessment closely connects instruction and assessment.

This paper will discuss how writing portfolio assessment was implemented into a fourth grade resource classroom. Three students were the focus of this project. Their progress as writers was traced as they conferenced with their teacher in selecting exhibits for portfolios, reflecting on their progress, and setting goals for future learning.

Writing Portfolios in a Resource Room

A Journal Article

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Marcquelyn S. Allensworth

December, 1999

This Journal Article by: Marcquelyn S. Allensworth

Entitled: Writing Portfolios in a Resource Room

has been approved as meeting the research article requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

12/30/99

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Abstract

Much attention has been given to the issue of assessing students' writing. The trend to view writing as a process has prompted educators to use qualitative assessment techniques to describe children's writing progress and instructional needs. The writing portfolio, one qualitative technique, provides an ongoing assessment that can be used throughout the year and extended throughout the school career of the child. In portfolio development, students can be actively involved in reflecting on their approach to the writing process and can, in collaboration with the teacher, set goals for future learning. Therefore, this type of assessment closely connects instruction and assessment.

This paper will discuss how writing portfolio assessment was implemented into a fourth grade resource classroom. Three students were the focus of this project. Their progress as writers was traced as they conferenced with their teacher in selecting exhibits for portfolios, reflecting on their progress, and setting goals for future learning.

Writing is a process to create meaning; therefore, children's involvement in the writing process needs to be described. Several descriptive or qualitative, techniques support each other in assessing children's approach to the writing process, such as student journals, teacher anecdotal records of observations, checklists, student-teacher conferences, and portfolios. All of these suggested qualitative assessment techniques can be a part of portfolio development (Valencia, 1990; Graves, 1994).

This article discusses writing portfolios and their implementation into a fourth-grade resource setting. The portfolios were used to show students' growth and instructional needs in writing. Three students with special needs were the focus of this graduate project.

Description of Portfolios

Portfolios are an ongoing collection of an individual student's writing that provides information on growth and instructional needs. Various types of exhibits can be included in the writing portfolio, such as written responses to reading, reading logs, pieces of writing at various stages of completion, different types of stories and poems, reports, unit projects, photographs, checklists, and journals (Valencia, 1990; Hewitt, 1995). The evidence presented in a student's portfolio explicitly reports an individual child's interests, efforts, and accomplishments. Through portfolio

development, students have the opportunity to develop a sense of ownership of their achievements and assessment. Such an activity gives children a purpose for learning and will help them to see themselves as writers (Calkins, 1990).

In addition to the writing folder, two types of portfolios can be developed. The writing folder contains all of a student's writing for the entire year. The working portfolio is a collection of writing exhibits selected to show a student's progress at specific times during the year. As students select each piece with the support of the teacher, they can reflect on their progress in reaching their specific goals, examine instructional needs, explore possibilities for future writing, and then set future goals. Involvement in such a process can closely connect instruction and assessment for both students and teachers (Graves, 1994).

Each exhibit for the portfolio needs to be labeled to guide the assessment process. A form can be provided for labeling that includes the name of the student, the date of the selection, description of the selection, reason for selection, and other comments such as goals achieved and instructional needs (Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991).

Writing portfolios can be housed in a pocket folder, a loose-leaf notebook, or even a special container designed by the student (Graves, 1994). The portfolios should be easily accessible to the students in the

classroom. Accessibility will encourage students to identify closely with the exhibits in their portfolios and to review them frequently as the school year progresses (Valencia, 1990).

At the end of the year, a showcase portfolio can be compiled from the working portfolio. Selected exhibits can be chosen to send on to the next year's program as a part of a student's long-term assessment. The remaining exhibits in the working portfolio can be bound or boxed and sent home as a keepsake (Graves, 1994; Tierney et al., 1991).

Implementation of Writing Portfolios

The classroom teacher can introduce the portfolio concept with examples of portfolios from artists' and the teacher's writing portfolios. The teacher needs to carefully guide the students to understand the purpose of portfolios. Then, the process will be more meaningful to them, and they will more easily establish a sense of ownership (Frank, 1994).

Each student needs to conference periodically with the teacher, usually four or five times a year, to select works that show the student's interests, progress, and future instructional needs. For the most part, the selection of exhibits should be the responsibility of the student. As the year progresses, the student can rely on the portfolio collection to show evidence of involvement in the writing process (Tierney et al., 1991; Frank, 1995).

Implementation of Writing Portfolios in a Fourth Grade Resource Classroom

My district, like many districts in the state of Iowa, has developed standards and benchmarks for students in grades K-12. The students are continually assessed and must meet specified criteria at the end of grades three, five, eight, and eleven. The criteria established by the district are assessed through standardized testing but can be more effectively assessed through qualitative measures that include portfolios. Therefore, writing portfolios were implemented into my fourth grade resource classroom.

The purpose of the resource classroom was to provide reading and writing instruction to students with special needs. Portfolios were used as an instruction-assessment strategy to help students create meaning from their writing and understand the process of writing. The eleven students assigned to me for language arts instruction had many different disabilities: cerebral palsy, pervasive autism, hyperactivity, attention disorder, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems.

At the beginning of the school year, the students of the class were reading and writing one to two grade levels below their peers (based on the district Curriculum-Based Measurements and the Woodcock Johnson Test of Achievement Revised). They had had limited opportunities to write

and labored over the task. Most of the students had difficulty finding writing topics and drawing meaning from their writing activity. At the beginning of the school year, they wrote short responses and incomplete sentences. Even though I provided them with constant support, they were still reluctant to write.

A classroom writing center was organized in an accessible location in our room to encourage writing. This center was equipped with a computer and other supplies that might be needed in the writing process, such as stencils, colored pencils, different sizes and colors of construction paper, lined and unlined paper, date stampers, markers, clip art books, scissors, glue, dictionaries, a spell checker, and computer disks. All of the items in the center were organized in a specific place on a shelf or in a drawer for easy access. The working portfolios were kept next to the writing center in a Rubbermaid hanging file container.

I explained to the class the components of the writing process, using my writing as examples. To show them how to find topics for writing, I asked the class to share with me ideas and experiences that were of special interest to them. As they gave ideas, I wrote them on the board and encouraged them to start making their own list of topics that particularly interested them. A few students could not generate a list so I asked them questions about things they wanted to learn more about,

experiences they had had, and interesting books they had read or listened to.

Each student was given a file folder to be used as a writing folder. They could keep their ongoing list of writing ideas in this folder along with their writing pieces. The students could personalize their folders by decorating the outside.

Each day the students had at least 25 minutes to write. To support their writing, dictionaries and their own spelling books that contained high frequency words and spaces for adding words they often used were issued to each student.

During the writing period, I too engaged in the writing process. I also used this time to keep anecdotal records of observations of the students' responses to the writing process and to conference with individual students. At the beginning of the year, the conferences were brief so I could make contact with each student daily. As the year progressed, their writing pieces became longer and more detailed so I could not conference with students as often. Then, I tried to conference every few days with them, depending on the students' needs. During the conferences, we reflected on the students' goals for writing. After we read through the current piece, we discussed its strengths and weaknesses. Finally, we set goals for their future pieces.

To assess student writing during the conferences, I used the rubric, "Evaluating Writing Pieces" (adapted by Batzel, 1992). This assessment tool provided a framework of writing elements that guided me in assessing students' growth and needs. From the rubric assessment, I presented mini-lessons, usually for small groups.

As the students began to become involved in the writing process, I introduced the working portfolio. I explained what this type of portfolio was and how it was different from their writing folder. Three fifth-grade students came to our classroom to show their writing portfolios as examples and motivated my students to start their collections. We practiced writing a reflection as a group using the form I had provided for them. I had them reflect on a journal assignment and write a label for it. They wrote their name, the date, and the title of their piece. Then, the students explained why they chose that piece for the portfolio. Finally, they wrote down what they thought their strengths were and what they would like to work on in the future. We discussed as a group their questions.

At the end of each quarter, the students selected pieces for their working portfolio. They usually chose two pieces from their resource classroom and a piece or two from the classroom in which they were mainstreamed. I encouraged the students to include pieces that showed

unique ideas, particular strengths, or definite progress. The students included a handwriting sample in the first and fourth quarters.

Examples of Portfolio Assessment with Fourth Grade Resource Students

During the school year, I focused on three of my students as they developed their writing portfolios. I wanted to follow the progress they made in developing writing abilities by using and also in reflecting on their progress and instructional needs through portfolio collection. This section includes exhibits from the three monitored students. The selections presented represented one of the exhibits the students picked from second, third, and fourth quarters.

Student A

Student A was a boy who qualified for special education because of his learning disability. This student read on a third-grade instructional level and was determined to be successful though he had some difficulty taking risks and focusing on a task and was hyperactive. He worked to remedy his speech difficulties with the school speech therapist. He often used double negatives and incorrect verb forms when he spoke. His parents and his older sister had similar speech patterns. This child had trouble finding a topic for writing and developing it, and he labored over spelling.

Period I

Student A's first portfolio selection was a journal entry in which he wrote about his plans for Halloween (see Figure 1). He had difficulty moving through the process of creating his entry and needed much teacher support. Student A's topic idea was original. The entry's focus shifted from what he was going to be for Halloween to his recent visit to a haunted house. This journal entry contains many details that are not presented sequentially. The many details in the middle of the journal entry are connected by the word "and." The entry has a beginning, middle, and ending, but they are not readily evident because the piece is one run-on sentence. It contains many form element mistakes related to spelling. He spelled most of the words phonetically. The student capitalized the beginning of the run-on sentence, people's names, and the word "I." Punctuation was supplied at the end of the entry.

Figure 1:Period I Selection

I am going as a vampier at halloween and I went to the honted house last sunday and I wurnt skerd when I went it shode a bed and a room with appes in a bucket and a fake hed hangen over it and a grave yard and was un jups awt of it and trise to sker us and it wont wurck and a dlock room and it is not gona bee skery with a dig bang and ther is a mazzle in it I was leter it was dark I did not cer if it was dark I tep going and I got disy when I got awt and we loded up in the truck and left to go home but fust we took Jonuthin home and then Androw h. he a then I whet home.

On his label (see Figure 2), Student A stated that he chose this piece because it was long. In our conference, he mentioned that he used to only write a couple of sentences, but now he writes a couple of pages. He stated that he wanted to make his entries neater by working on his

handwriting or by typing them. We also discussed how he utilized punctuation and capitalization within his piece. I read the run-on entry aloud as if it was written in one breath. He reflected that he needed more “stop signs” (periods) in his writing. We agreed that he needed to work on organizing his thoughts into sentences.

Figure 2:

Period I Label

SELF-REFLECTION	
Name _____	Date <u>Jan. 1998</u>
Title of Writing <u>Halloween journal</u>	
I selected this <u>for my portfolio</u>	
because <u>it was long.</u>	
The strengths this shows are <u>That I wrote a good story about Halloween.</u>	
Something I need to work on or would like to try is <u>Hand writing.</u>	

Period II

Student A's second selection was a journal entry in response to the book, The Rainbow Fish, by Marcus Pfister (New York: North-South, 1992), explaining what he had that he could share with others

(see Figure 3). Student A took some time to think of what he would write and then began writing. The first thing he wrote about was that he could share his bike with others. I prompted him to think of his personality and how he could share it to make people feel good about themselves. Then, Student A wrote about two different ideas. The ideas are not stated clearly, and no details support them. This entry lacks a beginning, middle, and ending. His ideas are not presented in a logical sequence. Most of the words he used in his writing were appropriate for the piece except for the statement “long lost friends.” The entry contains clear, simple sentences with only one run-on sentence. He used a capital letter at the beginning of his sentences and punctuation at the end of each sentence. Two of the words he misspelled—“sher” for the word “share” and “wen” of the word “when”—were spelled correctly once in the entry and then misspelled at another point. His journal entry has fewer spelling errors compared to the first quarter.

Figure 3:

Period II Selection

3-17-99 my shering

I have a bike that
I can shere with my
long lost freinds.

I have a lot of friends
They are nice to me
and I am nice to
them. When they need
help I am always there
for them wen they
need it, or wen I need
it.

On his label (see Figure 4), the student wrote that he chose this piece as an exhibit because he thought it showed that his writing was getting better. At our last conference, we had discussed that Student A needed to study organizing ideas into sentences. He reflected that he had worked hard on this goal. The boy stated that he should have written in cursive because that form allows him to write smaller and neater. We read the entry aloud to see if it made sense. Then, we went back through the entry to order the run-ons into complete sentences. He related that he probably did not read through his work after he had finished. We agreed

that he should read his writing to himself or out loud to a peer to check for clarity.

Figure 4:

Period II Label

SELF-REFLECTION	
Name _____	Date <u>3-1-99</u>
Title of Writing <u>My sharing</u>	
I selected this as <u>a portfolio selection</u>	
because <u>I'm getting better</u>	
The strengths this shows are <u>That I</u>	
<u>just perceive</u>	
Something I need to work on or would like to try is	
<u>better handwriting</u>	

Period III

For the third quarter entry, Student A chose his dinosaur story (see Figure 5). This assignment focused on organizing information into sentences and paragraphs. He presented the facts he had gathered on the topic of Tyrannosaurus Rex. It contains supporting details about their size, forms of protection, and eating habits. The report has a clear beginning, middle, and ending, and the information is connected in a logical manner. Student A used many appropriate and descriptive words in

his selection. A range of sentence length was used. One sentence in the report is unclear: "His teeth were as sharp as knives and to scarmethem and he would eat them." This piece has few form element errors. Capital letters were used at the beginning of the piece and for the specific name of the dinosaur, T-Rex. The end of each sentence was punctuated. Only a few words were misspelled: he misspelled "cold" for "could", "nives" for "knives", and "colist" for "coolest."

Figure 5: (part 1)

Period III Selection

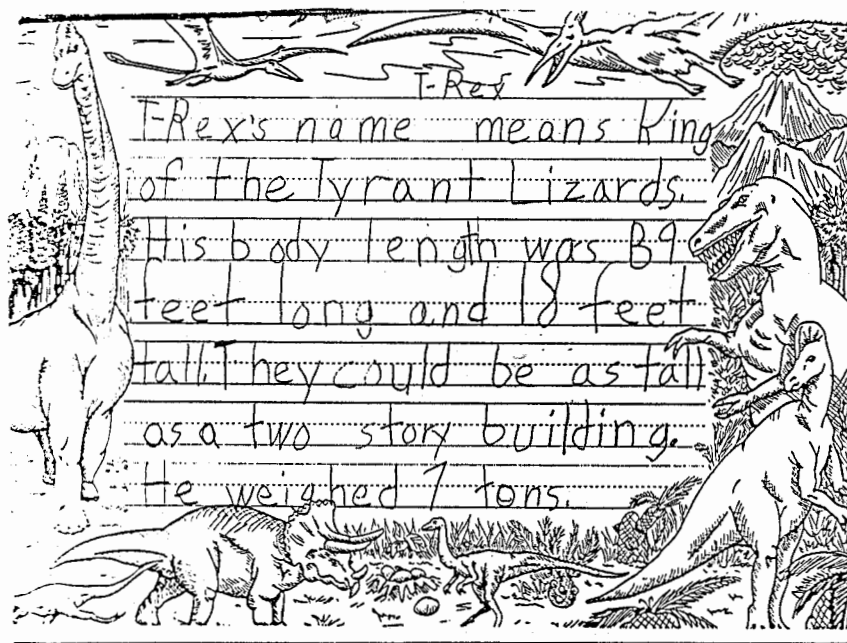


Figure 5: (part 2)

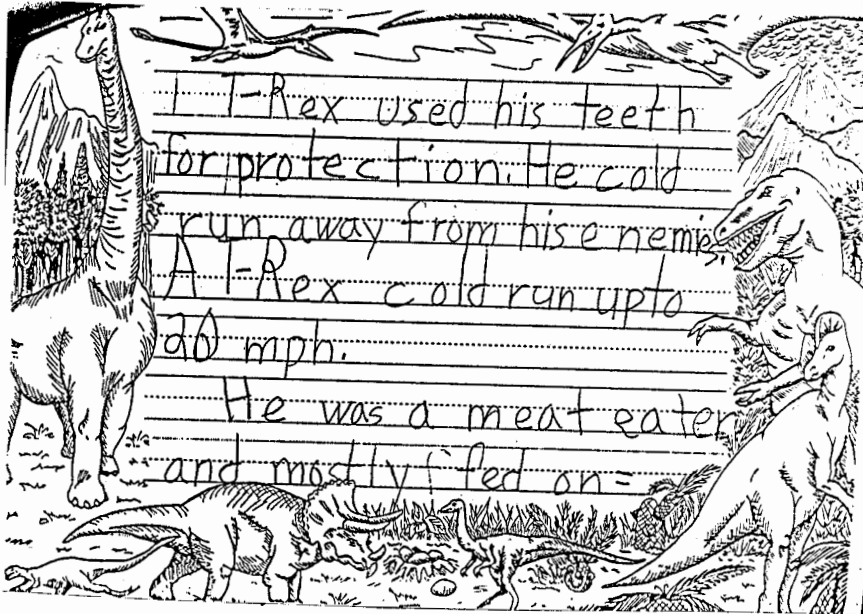
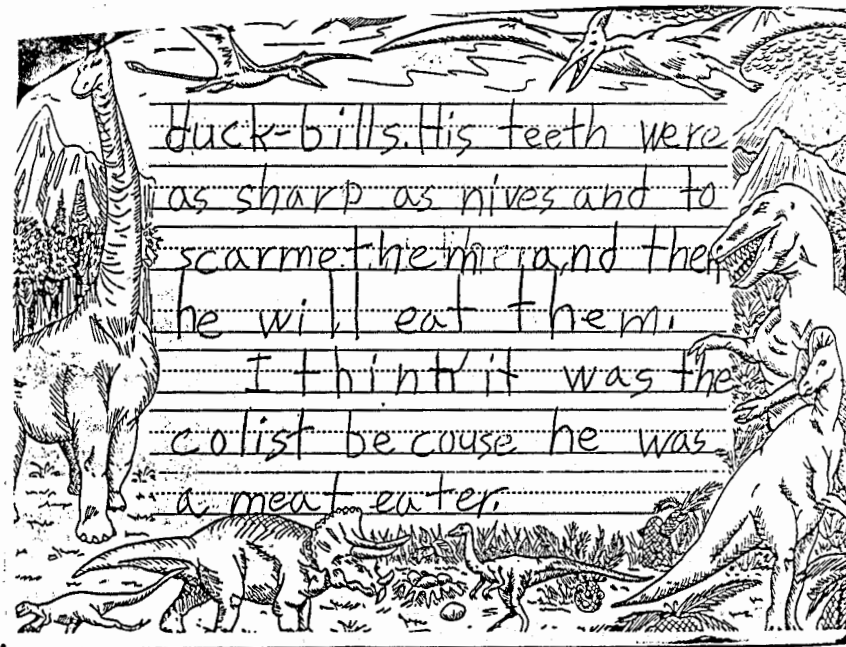


Figure 5: (part 3)



On his label (see Figure 6), he stated that he chose this report for his writing portfolio because he researched the information for his report and worked hard to write it. He stated that he thought he used punctuation correctly and organized his sentences into paragraphs. As we discussed his report, he related that making a web to organize information helped him to make paragraphs. He stated that this report was the best piece he had ever written. He also reflected that he had never written anything with paragraphs before. His future goals are to re-read his work for clarity and to use resources in the classroom (spell checker, dictionary, or a peer) to help him spell words he is not sure of.

Figure 6:

Period III Label

SELF-REFLECTION	
Name _____	Date <u>5-1-99</u>
Title of Writing <u>Flex Report</u>	
I selected this as <u>a portfolio selection</u>	
because <u>I worked hard and</u> <u>found information</u>	
The strengths this shows are <u>just paragraphs</u> <u>punctuation marks</u>	
Something I need to work on or would like to try is <u>indenting all paragraphs</u>	

Student A's portfolio selections show that he improved as a writer. He started the year by writing long run-on sentences that did not clearly follow a sequence of ideas. He is now able to write complete sentences of varying lengths that are capitalized at the beginning and punctuated at the end. Student A also includes more supporting details for his topics. His spelling errors decreased from Period I to Period III.

I also noticed a real difference in Student A's attitude toward writing. At the beginning of the year, he had difficulty finding a writing topic and complained about engaging in the writing process. By the end of the year, he was able to select topics more easily and liked to journal.

Student B

Student B was a boy who qualified for special education because of his learning disability and his physical needs due to cerebral palsy. This student was very active, social, and happy. He read at the second-grade instructional level and had had limited writing opportunities in the previous school year. To perform writing tasks, Student B had a laptop computer and printer. On his computer, he had Write Outloud, Co-Writer, and the Claris Works Word Processing programs. This child had difficulty focusing on a task and had missed a lot of school due to medical problems.

Period I

When Student B began writing at the beginning of the year, he kept telling his teacher associate that he did not know what to write and wanted her to tell him what he should type. The associate would repeat what he needed to do and then would assist other students. After she went on to another task, he would start typing. Student B's first portfolio selection (see Figure 7) was an entry from his journal, written after reading part of Arthur's Halloween, by Marc Brown (Toronto: Little, 1982). His selection contains original ideas and details based on his reading. The ideas are sequential but lack an ending. He used common word choices that were appropriate for the entry. The sentences vary in length; one of them is unclear. The beginning of each sentence and the names of the characters are capitalized. The ends of his sentences are punctuated. Throughout the entry, there are several spelling mistakes.

Figure 7:

Period I Selection

**I read Arthur's Hallloween
Costume. He was ging to be a gosts
but then Arthur spiled the kachup on
his costume. Violet told him ot
pretend it was blood. But gosts don't
have blood.**

On his label (see Figure 8), Student B stated that he chose this piece of writing because he did it all by himself. He said that he did a good job using capital letters and punctuation and placing spaces between words. When we read through his entry, he noticed some form errors. We discussed how important it is to proofread one's writing. I suggested to him that he needed to go back and re-read his writing to see that all of his ideas made sense. I also mentioned that he could use the spell checker on his computer to help him edit his spelling. He was not quite sure how to use the spell checker so we decided that I would show him the next time he edited his writing. He stated in his reflection that he would rather use Claris Works than the Co-Writer because it was faster. He decided he needed to read over his work for clarity and spelling mistakes.

Figure 8:**Period I Label**

Title of Writing: Arthur's Halloween

I selected this for my portfolio because I did it all by myself.

The strengths this shows are putting periods, capital letters, and I left spaces between the words.

Something I need to work on is spelling. I like to type my journals with out Co-Writer because it is faster.

Period II

Student B chose another journal entry as his exhibit. It is a reaction to the book, Frog and Toad Together, by Arnold Lobel (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) (see Figure 9). The exhibit does not have a clear beginning, middle or ending. The supporting details are not connected so they are unclear. Words are missing, therefore, the sentences are not clear. The beginning of the sentences are capitalized, and the ending is punctuated. The entry has no spelling mistakes.

Figure 9

Period II Selection

3-26 99

Frog and Toad together Toad wrote a list of things to do today. And on his list it said to gofor a walk with and then he crossed out gofor a walk

On his label (see Figure 10), Student B wrote that he chose this piece for his writing portfolio because he wrote a lot about the story and he could read it all by himself. As we read through the entry, Student C noticed that the first line of the entry did not make sense. We reviewed how to capitalize and underline book titles. Student C also noticed that he had not clearly described the list that Toad wrote. He seemed frustrated that he had not left a space between the word "go" and "for" twice within the entry. Student C set a goal to re-read his work and try to use the Co-Writer program to avoid some of the organizational mistakes.

Figure 10:**Period II Label**

Frog and toad together

It was funny and it was a book that I could read.

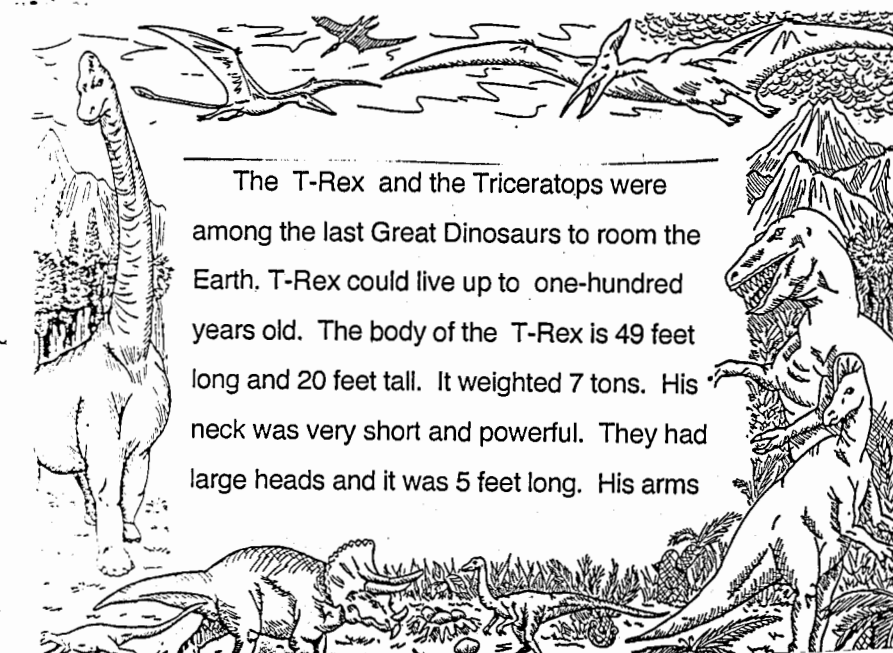
I could read it all by myself. I told a lot about the story.

I need to read over what I have written. Learn to use Co-Writer faster.

Period III

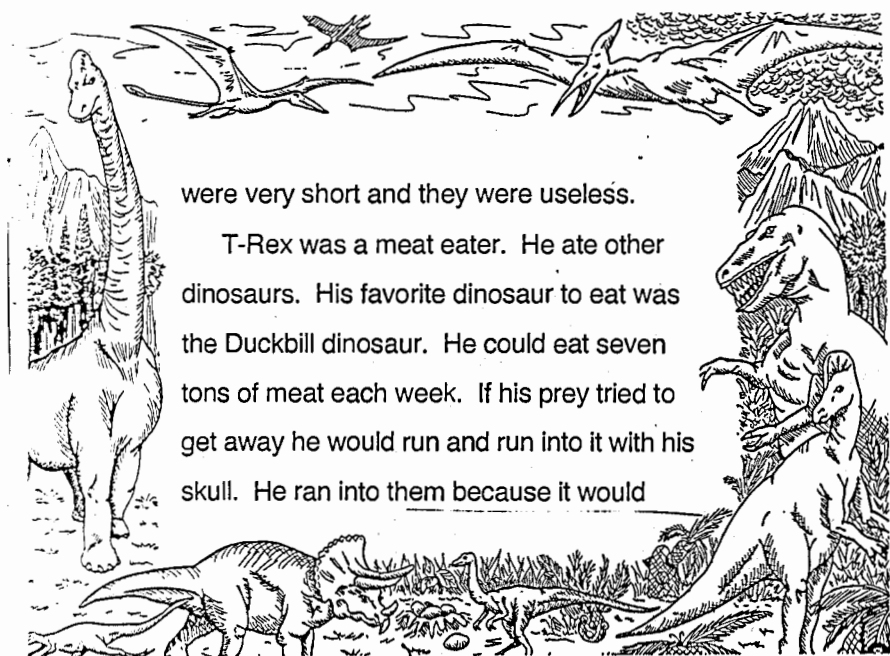
For his third period selection, Student B chose a dinosaur report that he wrote about Tyrannosaurus Rex (see Figure 11). The assignment focused on organizing information into sentences and paragraphs. This report focuses on the topic with many supporting details about the dinosaur's size, eating habits, and means of protection. Student B's report has a beginning, middle, and ending, and is written in a logical sequence. In this selection Student B uses more precise word choices, such as "short and powerful" (describing the neck), "powerful jaw," and "teeth that were shaped like sharp knives." The sentences vary in length. Correct form elements are used. Because he used the Co-Writer program, there were no spelling errors.

Figure 11: (part 1)

Period III Selection

The T-Rex and the Triceratops were among the last Great Dinosaurs to roam the Earth. T-Rex could live up to one-hundred years old. The body of the T-Rex is 49 feet long and 20 feet tall. It weighed 7 tons. His neck was very short and powerful. They had large heads and it was 5 feet long. His arms

Figure 11: (part 2)



were very short and they were useless.

T-Rex was a meat eater. He ate other dinosaurs. His favorite dinosaur to eat was the Duckbill dinosaur. He could eat seven tons of meat each week. If his prey tried to get away he would run and run into it with his skull. He ran into them because it would

Figure 11: (part 3)

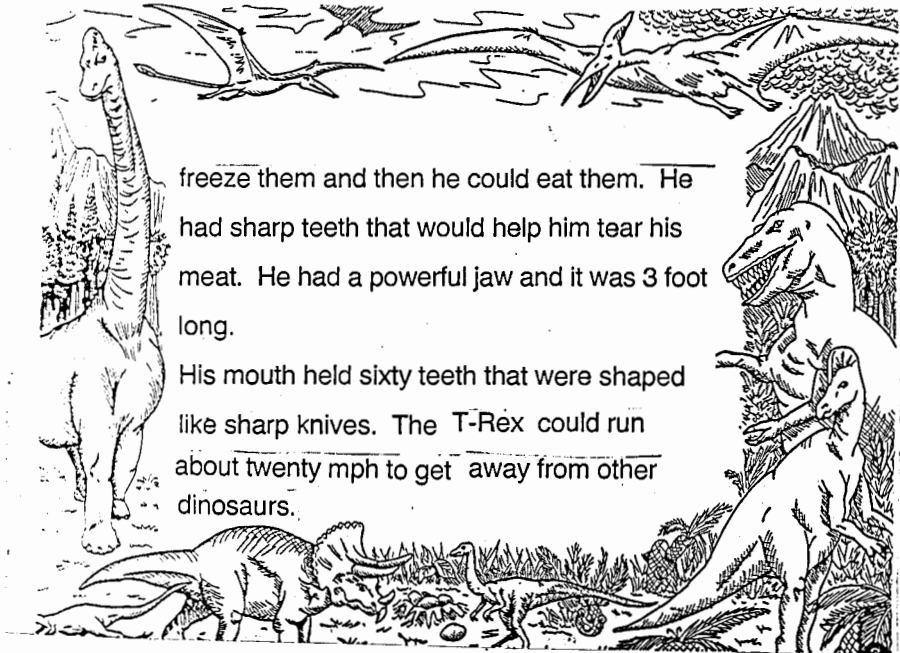
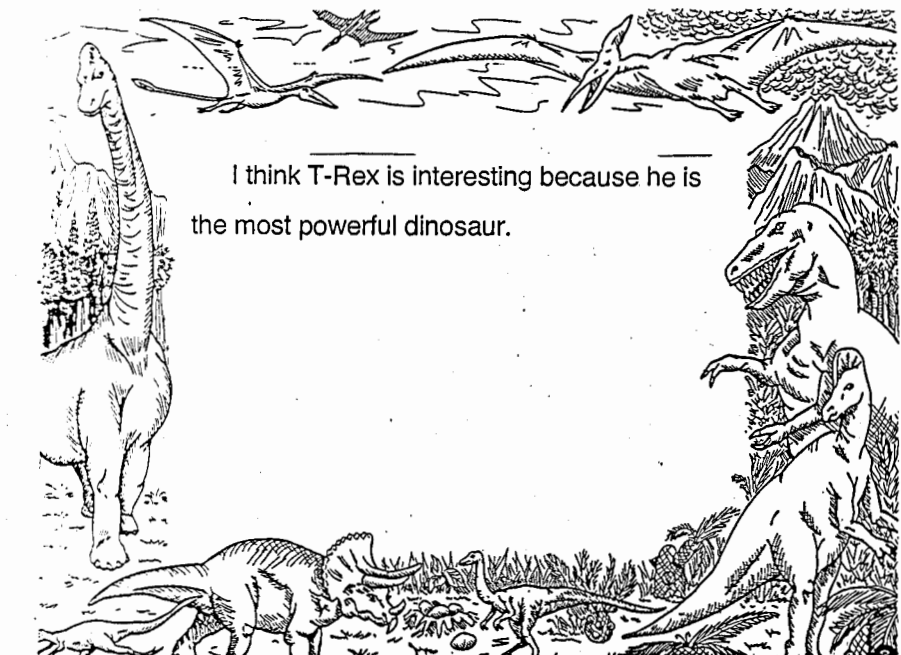


Figure 11: (part 4)



On the label (see Figure 12), Student B stated that he chose this report for his writing portfolio because he thought it was interesting. He reflected that he did well because he used many sentences and paragraphs. In our conference, he told me that that was the longest report he had ever written and that writing was a lot easier for him now that he was used to the Co-Writer program. He said that the web he constructed helped him to see what information he needed for his report and how to organize his report into paragraphs. His future goals were to continue using Co-Writer for writing assignments, and he wanted to be able to write better and faster.

Figure 12:

Period III Label

T-Rex

Because I thought it was interesting.

I used Lots of sentences and paragraphs. I did lots of research on the T-REX.

I would like to use Co-Writer better and faster.

Student B's portfolio shows that he improved as a writer. He started the year by writing simple and incomplete sentences. His sentences did not supply many details and he often did not use capitalization and

punctuation. Now, he writes complete sentences that contain appropriate details, capitalization, and punctuation.

The most noticeable improvement is Student B's attitude toward writing. At the beginning of the year, he could not select writing topics and would give up because it was too laborious to think of ideas and then to type them. At that time, he relied heavily on his teacher associate and me to support him. At the end of the year, he had his own ideas for writing and enjoyed using the Co-Writer program. This program assisted him in spelling and editing because it required him to choose the appropriate spelling or tense that would fit his writing. I knew Student B enjoyed writing when he asked if I could create a file on his computer that served as his diary!

Student C

Student C qualified for special education because of his learning disability. This student was frequently off task and unwilling to take risks. He read at a second-grade instructional level and disliked writing. While reading, he relied heavily on letter-sound strategies, which caused him to labor over each word, therefore, resulting in poor comprehension. He often guessed at a word by looking at its first letter and then would say a word that had a similar beginning. After his guesses, he would look at the teacher or a peer to see if he was correct. With teacher redirection, he

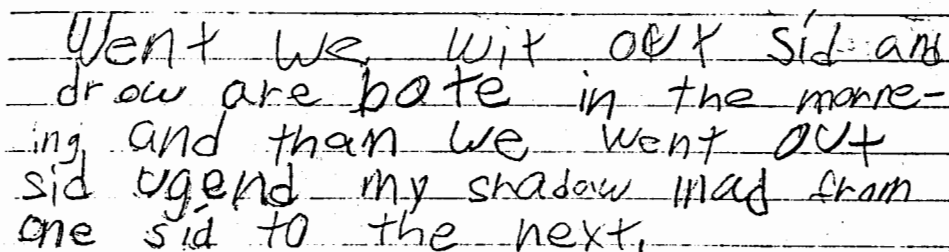
began to take risks and read for meaning. Most of his written work was completed in a haphazard manner.

Period I

Student C's first portfolio selection was a journal entry that he wrote after a class activity about shadows (see Figure 13). The selection focuses on the shadow activity but lacks details to make his ideas clear. It lacks a clear beginning, middle, or ending. The response is written in one run-on sentence. Student C did not include capitalization at the beginning nor punctuation at the end of his run-on sentence. His exhibit has many spelling errors; for example, he used the spelling "went" for both "went" and "when."

Figure 13:

Period I Selection

The image shows a student's handwritten work on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and contains several spelling errors. The text reads: "Went we wit out sid and draw are bate in the morn- ing, and than we went out sid vgend my shadow had from one sid to the next." The words "bate" and "vgend" are misspellings of "bath" and "went" respectively. The sentence is a run-on sentence with no punctuation at the end.

Went we wit out sid and draw are bate in the morn- ing, and than we went out sid vgend my shadow had from one sid to the next.

On his label (see Figure 14), Student C stated that he chose this piece because he knew what he was writing about. He also said that he enjoyed studying shadows and the sun. After we read through his piece

together, he said that he did a good job on the entry because he took his time when he was writing it. He realized that the words in his written piece were not those that he was thinking of during the writing process. We agreed that his ideas would have been more clear if he had read it after he finished. He also thought he needed to work on improving his handwriting and punctuation.

Figure 14:

Period I Label

SELF-REFLECTION	
Name _____	Date <u>11/21/08</u>
Title of Writing <u>Shadow Reflection</u>	
I selected this as <u>for my portfolio</u>	
because <u>I now what I was riding a bat.</u>	
The strengths this shows are <u>I took my time.</u>	
Something I need to work on or would like to try is <u>better hand writing and better punctuation.</u>	

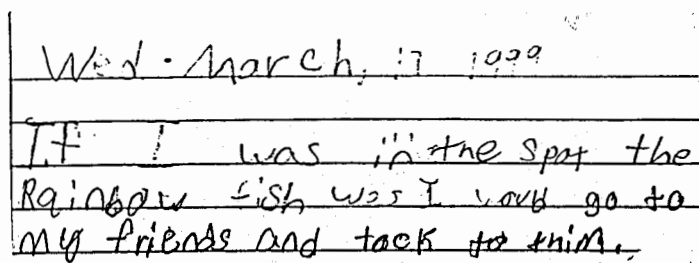
Period II

Student C's second selection was a journal entry (see Figure 15) that he wrote in response to the book, The Rainbow Fish, by Marcus

Pfister (New York: North-South, 1992). His entry idea was original because he took the role of the Rainbow Fish and explained what he would do if he were in that position. He presented few details and made no attempt at developing a beginning, middle, and ending. Again, the exhibit was one run-on sentence. This sentence had two spelling errors and a beginning capital letter and punctuation at the end.

Figure 15:

Period II Selection



Wed - March, 17 1999
If I was in the spot the
Rainbow fish was I would go to
my friends and talk to them.

On his label (see Figure 16), Student C stated that he chose this exhibit for his writing portfolio because it was the best journal entry. In our conference, I asked him why he thought it was his best. He replied that he spelled a lot of words correctly and he remembered capitalization and punctuation. When we read through the entry together, he was able to elaborate on his ideas and noticed that his entry was not very clear. He stated that he wanted to work on his handwriting because it was sloppy.

Figure 16:

Period II Label

SELF-REFLECTION	
Name _____	Date _____
Title of Writing <u>Rainbow fish</u>	
I selected this as <u>a portfolio selection</u>	
because <u>it was my best</u>	
<u>Journal page.</u>	
The strengths this shows are <u>good punctu-</u>	
<u>ation.</u>	
Something I need to work on or would like to try is _____	
<u>better handwriting</u>	

Period III

Student C's third selection was about his summer plans (see Figure 17). His topic was ramping bikes. He gave details about where he ramps bikes, with whom, what you need for ramping, and why he enjoys it. This selection did not have a clear introduction to his topic, but his ideas were presented in a logical order. He used many words that were appropriate for the topic of ramping. He included a precise word "reckless" to describe why he enjoys ramping. Student C had some sentences that varied in length, but many of them were incomplete and unclear. In this entry, he did include punctuation but forgot to capitalize the beginning of sentences.

He only misspelled a few words in this selection: "knou" for know,"
 "balonce" for "balance," and "becaust" for "because."

Figure 17:

Period III Selection

Ramping
 Bikes

Daniel and I go
 ramping at my grandpa's and he
 my house Daniel's house.
 in. The best bike are
 Dyno orgt. need to know how
 to ride a bike well + have
 good balance. good ramp strong
 enough to hold you. need to
 know how big a ramp you can
 jump.

It's to ride your bike
 you are outside - meet new
 friends and gives you something
 to do becaust its reckless.

On his label (see Figure 18), he stated that he chose this entry because it was his best writing. In our conference, he said it was his best because it was like a story and he did a good job explaining ramping. He related that the strengths in his selection were his correct punctuation and paragraphs. We read through his selection together, and he noticed that he had omitted words and capital letters. For his future goal, he wanted to

work on reading through his work more carefully and taking his time when writing.

Figure 18:

Period III Label

SELF-REFLECTION	
Name _____	Date _____
Title of Writing <u>Ramping Bikes</u>	
I selected this as <u>a portfolio selection</u>	
because <u>I think it was my best writing.</u>	
The strengths this shows are <u>good punctuation and good punctuation</u>	
Something I need to work on or would like to try is <u>read my story carefully</u>	

Student C's writing portfolio selections showed that he had made some improvements in his writing. At the beginning of the year, he wanted me to help him select ideas and spell words. His writing pieces were one run-on sentence. His journal entries were short and did not have many supporting details. By the end of the year, he was writing sentences of varying lengths that contained more details to support his topic though many of his sentences were incomplete and unclear. He still did not develop a beginning, middle, and ending for his pieces.

Student C's attitude toward writing improved as the year progressed. He enjoyed writing about things that interested him but still hurried and did not want to spend too much time on the task.

Conclusions

Implementing writing portfolios into my resource room was a positive experience for the students. They became immersed in the writing process and the assessment of it. Being able to have access to their portfolios and see the progress they had made in developing their writing abilities was energizing for them.

As a special education teacher, I think writing portfolios are essential. They provide an authentic way for me to assess the students' writing goals, progress, and instructional needs. I found that this assessment technique offered a more accurate picture of my students as writers. It was easier for me to see their growth, strengths, and weaknesses since I had an ongoing collection of their work. With this assessment strategy, I could eliminate the writing probes that our district has provided as Curriculum-Based Measurements. The results of the district's assessment technique are not valid because they are timed and their norms are based on how many words the students write and how many words they spell correctly. Through the writing portfolios, the students and I learned about their emerging writing abilities.

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