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ABSTRACT
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the end of their program, as well as from 2 sets of interviews with 11
subjects at the end of their first year of teaching. If and how new teachers
valued the instruction and collaborative experience of creating professional
portfolios in their preservice year was studied, and whether preservice
teachers maintained their portfolios and continued using them as tools for
growth were studied. Whether these first-year teachers implemented portfolios
with their own students was also studied. Overall, the data reveal that the
first-year teachers did value portfolios as an important form of
collaborative assessment and reflection, both for themselves and for their
students. Most of them did continue to use their professional portfolios in a
modified way during their first year or had an intent to maintain their
portfolios in the future, but their capacity to use portfolios with students
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conditions that supported and hindered portfolio implementation during the
first year of teaching, including cooperative relationships with peers. It
also explores the implications for teacher/educators and for school and
district leaders in supporting innovation by new teachers. (Contains 23
references.) (Author/SLD)

Professional Portfolios during Preservice and First Year of Teaching:
Creating A Base for Ongoing Professional Growth

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Abstract

This paper outlines a study involving the use of portfolios by first year teachers after their experiences in a ten-month preservice teacher education program in which professional portfolios were implemented. Data were gathered from a questionnaire administered to teacher candidates at the end of their program, as well as from two sets of interviews with 11 of them in their first year of teaching. We were interested in exploring the following: a) if and how new teachers valued the instruction and collaborative experience of creating professional portfolios in their preservice year; b) if first year teachers maintained their professional portfolios and continued using them as tools for growth; and, c) if first year teachers implemented portfolios with their own students. Overall, the data revealed that the first year teachers did value portfolios as an important form of collaborative assessment and reflection, both for themselves and for their students. Most of them did continue to use their professional portfolios in a modified way during their first year or had an intent to maintain their portfolios in the future, but their capacity to use portfolios with students during their first year of teaching varied. This study reports on the conditions that supported and hindered portfolio implementation during the first year of teaching, including cooperative relationships with peers. It also explores the implications for teacher educators and school and district leaders in supporting innovation by new teachers. Ongoing research will determine whether the introduction of professional portfolios in teacher education can provide a base for professional learning and use of portfolios with students.

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Introduction

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection. (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 60).

Portfolios are a rather recent phenomenon (Lyons, 1998), having only been introduced into teacher education in the 1980s. A 2001 ERIC search indicated a significant growth over the last decade in the number of published articles on portfolios in teacher education, from 1 in 1991 to more than 100 by the year 2000. Barton and Collins (1993), among others, cite the increasing use of portfolios in teacher education programs. As teacher education programs explore ways to meet current educational challenges, programs are being re-conceptualized to include a focus on reflective practice through the use of portfolios. The reflective thinking and writing help candidates by having them, orally and in writing, rehearse and articulate their emerging philosophy in light of the varied experiences in their professional program and school-based experiences.

Portfolios are recommended for the assessment of teacher learning because they recognize the multidimensional nature of teachers' performance and achievement; they are situated in classroom contexts; they are based on self- and collaborative assessment, and they measure performance over time (Winsor & Ellefson, 1995). As a tool to integrate learning, foster inquiry, inform professional decision-making, and encourage self-assessment and goal setting, professional portfolios hold great potential for career-long professional learning and growth (Diez, 1994). Additionally, engaging in the portfolio process may provide a model for teacher candidates to use in the learning and assessment of their own students.

In this study, we wanted to address both the continuation of the professional portfolio and the use of portfolios with students by first year teachers. Our guiding research questions were: After experience in their preservice year with a collaborative professional portfolio process and an introduction to using portfolios with students, do first year teachers 1) maintain their

professional portfolio and continue to use it as a tool for growth? and 2) implement portfolios with their own students?

Theoretical Framework

This study explored the hypothesis that the use of professional portfolios early in one's career creates a base for growth as a learner and as a teacher (see Figure 1). We speculated that implementing and internalizing the concepts embedded in developing and maintaining teacher candidates' professional portfolios in their preservice year would increase teacher familiarity and confidence with this approach and would, therefore, facilitate their subsequent development in: 1) the continuing use of professional portfolios to foster growth during their first year of teaching (Goal #A) as well as during their future careers (Goal #C), and 2) the use of portfolios with students in their teaching (Goal #B).

Figure 1: Exploring the Implementation of Professional Portfolios during the Preservice Year
        as a Base for Growth as a Professional

Goal #C

> **Use of Portfolios for Career-Long Professional Growth for Self and with Students**

Goal #A

> **Continuing Use of Professional Portfolios In First Year of Teaching**

Goal #B

> **Use of Portfolios With Students In First Year of Teaching**

4
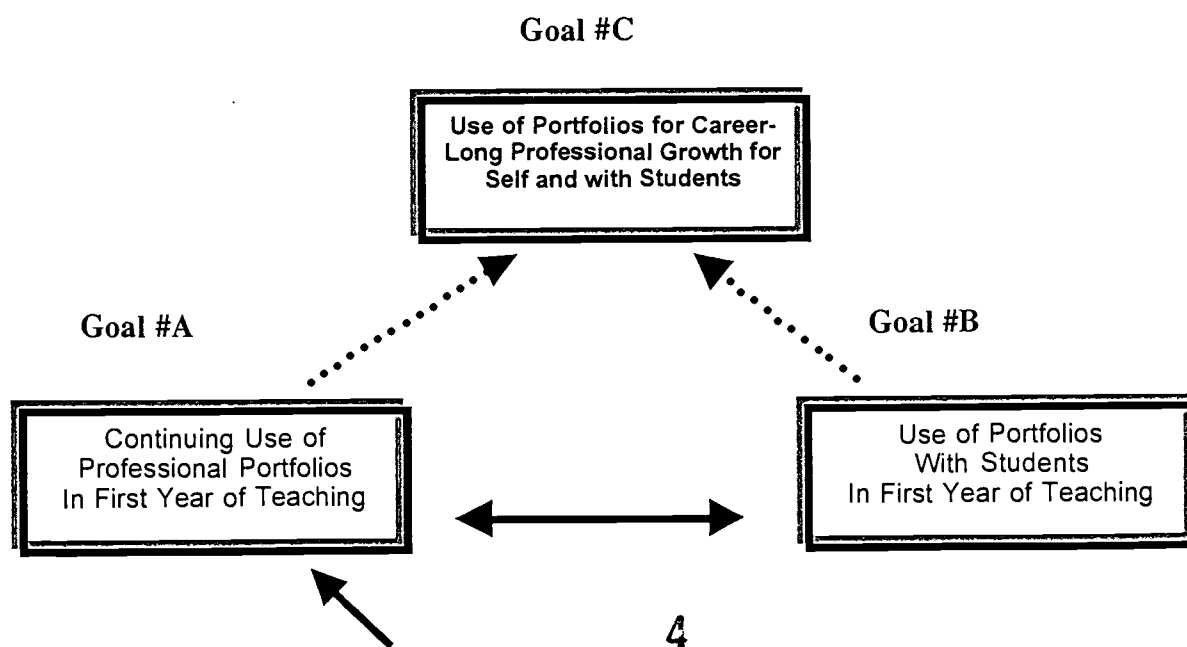
↗   Transfer of
     understanding from
     self to use with
     students

Methodology

Context

The study was conducted over a two-year period beginning with the experiences of teacher candidates in a post-degree, ten-month program leading to a Bachelor of Education and recommendation for teaching certification in the Province of Ontario. Their 1999-2000 preservice program included in-class instruction plus two five-week practicum placements and a six-week internship. The professional portfolio was a major integrated component of the program worth 40% of each of four courses across the program.

Most of the participants in the study began their first year of teaching in September 2000 in public schools in and outside the Toronto area. The grades taught by the participants in our study ranged from kindergarten to grade 8, with one in a special education resource position.

The process of implementation of the portfolio during the preservice year included the use of a specific framework as outlined in The Portfolio Organizer (Rolheiser, Bower & Stevahn, 2000). A basic premise of this framework is that the broader the community for developing and sharing the portfolio, the richer the resource base for learners. "For cooperation to work well, you explicitly have to structure five essential elements ..." (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994, p. 1:9). Based on the cooperative learning work by Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1994), the basic elements that were consciously structured into the portfolio process included positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, promotive interaction (face-to-face), interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing.

The key decisions in the framework included the purpose (i.e., assessment), type (i.e., growth), audiences (i.e., peers and teachers in schools), and time frame for the portfolio (i.e., beginning in early September to the last class in April). The portfolio as a performance-based tool encouraged candidates to demonstrate growth and understanding toward six key images of

what it means to be an effective teacher: 1) diversity, 2) ethics and legalities, 3) curriculum, instruction, and assessment, 4) active learning, 5) collaboration, and 6) philosophy. Clear evaluation criteria complete with descriptors, a rubric, and a self-evaluation component were outlined at the beginning of the portfolio process and reinforced throughout the year.

Learning samples accompanied by written reflections comprised the entries that teacher candidates included in their portfolios as evidence of their learning. The aspect of written reflection was a critical component of the portfolio process. It was here that teacher candidates developed "metacognition; thinking about their own learning and, ideally, identifying their own strengths and areas for growth" (Bower & Rolheiser, 2000). A number of studies report the increase of reflective thinking on teaching as a key benefit of professional portfolios (Borko, Michalec, Timmons, & Siddle, 1997, Wade & Yarbrough, 1996, Berry et al., 1991; Biddle & Lasley, 1991; Richert, 1990).

To facilitate the process of reflection, instructors introduced a framework "retelling, relating and reflecting" (Schwartz & Bone, 1995) that provided prompts and questions to promote higher levels of thinking and analysis in portfolio entries. Candidates were encouraged to retell (What is your entry about? Describe your entry.), relate (Why did you choose this as an entry? Why is it significant to you? What connections can you make?), and reflect (What did you learn? How did you grow or change?).

At intervals throughout the year, teacher candidates were encouraged to reflect on their own progress, look at their areas of strength and challenges, articulate their goals and decide what actions they needed to take to achieve those goals. In cooperative group portfolio interviews in December and April, teacher candidates were individually asked questions and encouraged to share their learning by an interview team of university and field-based personnel. They were provided with feedback from the interview team and two to four peers. The combination of this feedback and their own self-evaluation helped them to set goals for future development.

A variety of opportunities for small group learning and sharing were provided throughout the year in the form of "Cooperative Portfolio Carousels" where teacher candidates came together in pairs and groups to share their entries and to write responses to their peers. Candidates were also expected to independently generate and collect peer responses over the course of the year to be included in the final submission of their portfolio.

Another important opportunity for sharing was evident during the "Portfolio Institute", a full day event on using portfolios with students in which associate teachers and teacher candidates experienced professional development together. During this day, a class of grade 8 students and their teacher also joined the class to present their own portfolios, answer questions, and share their learning, as well as interview the teacher candidates about their portfolios. The impact of this activity was evident in comments made by teacher candidates who only then recognized the value of using portfolios with students.

During this day, the framework in The Portfolio Organizer (Rolheiser, Bower & Stevahn, 2000), which was used to help implement the portfolio process for teacher candidates, was *explicitly* introduced so that teacher candidates would begin to transfer their understandings about professional portfolios to using portfolios with students. It was this transfer that we were curious to understand more about during the first year of teaching, and which we decided to probe further during our interviews.

Sources of Data

1) Portfolio assessment was implemented throughout the ten-month preservice program. Two of the authors were participant observers compiling field notes of portfolio-related instructional processes and candidates' reactions and program experiences. Here, the researcher observer role was known to the group but was secondary to the researchers' roles as participants (Merriam, 1998).

2) We surveyed 49 elementary teacher candidates on their last day of their preservice program. Participation was voluntary. The questionnaire items focused on the effectiveness of the implementation process of professional portfolios for the teacher candidates, on their perceptions about the usefulness of the portfolio process for their growth and development as professionals, and on their willingness to implement portfolio assessment with their present and future students. This current study builds on those findings reported elsewhere (Rolheiser, Schwartz & Ross, 2001), but what is significant here is that it was from the survey analysis that a purposeful sampling of 11 teacher candidates occurred. These teacher candidates were extremely positive about the portfolio process, and on the survey, scored high on the scale measuring teacher candidates' perceptions of the contribution of portfolio instruction to teachers'

professional growth and high on the scale measuring their willingness to use portfolios in teaching.

3) We interviewed the sub-group of 11 teacher candidates (now first year teachers) after their first two months of teaching (October 2000) and again at the end of their first year (May/June 2001). These interviews explored their perceptions and experiences with professional and student portfolios during their first year of teaching. The interviews took 40 to 60 minutes each. The first set of interviews was conducted via telephone and detailed notes were recorded. Most of the second interviews took place face-to-face. The second set of interviews was tape recorded, transcribed, and sent to participants as a check. For both sets of interviews a semi-structured guide was utilized. The names of participants and any other identifying information were changed to ensure anonymity.

Analysis of the data included: 1) reviewing records outlining the implementation process for portfolios during the preservice year; 2) developing a coding scheme from the first set of interviews using analytic induction and constant comparison; and 3) coding, sorting, and organizing data from the second set of interviews using NUD*IST software. Credibility of the findings was enhanced through 1) triangulation of data sources (interviews, field notes and interpreters); 2) maintaining an audit trail over time by creating lists of connections and counting instances (Miles and Huberman, 1994); and, 3) recording data accurately (audio-taping interviews and doing member checks).

Qualitative Findings/Discussion

In the analysis of the qualitative data from the October interviews of the 11 new teachers, a number of themes emerged (Rolheiser, Schwartz, & Ross, 2000). The follow-up interviews at the end of the first year of teaching further probed these themes. The following themes and sub-themes were confirmed and are elaborated below.

Theme 1: Maintaining the professional portfolio and implementing portfolios with students during the first year of teaching

Almost all of the 11 teachers in their first year of teaching continued to maintain their professional portfolio in some format. All except one continued to collect artifacts and store these in their portfolios. Some of them also recorded some written notes on post-its, which they included on each artifact. Three added full written reflections. It was clear that the professional portfolio process was a valued activity that most were willing to continue in some way, however simplified. Only Brandon consistently maintained the written reflections to the same extent as in the preservice year.

> I've continued right from where we left off...I've gone with the same format as last year, the six key images. I find that's easiest. I tie in my entry to those six images. I like structure. I like thinking about things like diversity, curriculum, ethics, and legalities. I've been trying to balance them out this year...I've written quite a few more ethics and legalities entries so I can get a balance throughout my whole portfolio. After my first teacher observation, I wrote about the experience, and I shared it with the vice-principal...

Regarding implementation of portfolios with students, there were mixed findings. Of the 11 new teachers, 9 of them implemented an aspect of the portfolio process with students. For example, Jesse and Melissa, intermediate teachers, began to use portfolios with their students in one particular subject area since it was an expected requirement of their school or board. Antoine and Brandon, however, made personal decisions to replicate the process in much the same way as they had experience during their preservice year. Brandon said: "I got the students interested by showing them my portfolio, and telling them about what I did with it. I told them that their portfolio would be much the same as mine". Antoine began the portfolio process with his students the first week of school. "They are structured exactly like we did last year...I modeled it [the portfolio process] exactly as our class did because it's excellent how we did it. I couldn't think of a better system." By the end of the year, however, he reported being disappointed by his inability to continue the focus in the way that he had envisioned it.

Interestingly, both Antoine and Brandon were seen to be strong proponents of the portfolio concept during their preservice year. Brandon used portfolios with students in his second practicum setting, and shared entries and the portfolio concept with teachers during his preservice internship. Antoine, who had graduated with an exemplary portfolio, talked about the portfolio process as a highlight of his preservice year. It was clear from our interviews that having a positive experience with portfolios, these new teachers wanted to provide these same benefits to their students, especially the cooperative dimensions of

the process. Experiencing portfolios themselves enabled the new teachers to immediately apply their knowledge and understandings and use portfolios with their intermediate students whom they believed could handle the process, although at times, extenuating circumstances hindered full implementation.

A few of the other new teachers did not implement portfolios in a comprehensive way but used their portfolio knowledge and experience to implement journals. For Donna, who was working with students with special needs, writing portfolios were "more of a tracking of their writing…I wanted them to have a good collection…to be able to look back at the end of the year, to look back at the beginning work they did". For Stella, journal writing was similar to the portfolio process since it represented a way to record the reflective process.

> We don't have them (student portfolios) in the traditional sense. We do journal writing…I ask them all sorts of questions…there's some reflection…I think teaching kids how to explain 'why' is teaching them how to reflect. It's a step…In the beginning of second term, I had them write in their goals and I had them discuss them when their parents came in for interviews…It wasn't a portfolio and I didn't call it a portfolio…I was thinking of a portfolio but the way I presented it was 'think about what you've done, think about what you've accomplished, what you want to improve on, what do you want to keep, what were your challenges, what were your successes', and that's the way I positioned it to them.

New teachers shared a strong *intent* to maintain their own professional portfolio and use portfolios with students. At the end of the year, Clarke was determined to continue to use portfolios for professional purposes and with his students. "I don't care how busy I am, that 40 minutes is going to be my portfolio time, even if it's just 40 minutes scratching away, just inputting into the computer…I know for sure next year, when I have grade one, [I will use student portfolios] because they will be able to write as the year progresses."

At the beginning of the year, those that reported that they were not using portfolios with their students but would be initiating them in the near future gave a variety of reasons for the decision. Some felt that the time was not quite right, while some wanted to wait until more work was accomplished by the students or until a more collaborative classroom context had been developed. Perhaps instinctively, they felt that they would be feeling less overwhelmed and more open to initiating portfolios with their students after they felt more comfortable with their teaching context. By the end of the year, most had begun implementation of the portfolio process in some way, but their desired vision had not been attained.

Theme 2: Influences of other teachers on portfolio implementation

Just as teacher candidates were influenced by the philosophical and practical stance of associate teachers in using portfolio assessment with students during their practicum and internship placements, similarly, new teachers were influenced by others (mentors, team members, staff colleagues, and administrators) in maintaining their own professional portfolio and in using portfolios with students.

First year teachers reported great support from assigned and informal mentors on staff in terms of curriculum guidance, classroom management strategies, and resource materials. However, none of the new teachers saw other teachers in their schools using portfolios with students in a concerted and systematic way. As a result, these new teachers lacked role models to help them expand their knowledge and implement portfolios with their students. Some reported that portfolios with students were used by teachers in the school, but if the school culture was not particularly collaborative then portfolio ideas were not discussed or shared openly. Terry, a grade 2 teacher, said she thought they were being used in the intermediate grades in her school, while Jesse, a teacher of intermediate students, saw little evidence of portfolio implementation in her school even though in October she reported that using portfolios with students was expected. "It's encouraged, but people don't talk about it". Only a few new teachers in the study, like Antoine, reported having conversations with their principals about them. "It's a progressive school...there was a great deal of encouragement from the administration to use portfolios and to be creative in our teaching."

Terry saw the professional portfolio as mostly being used for leadership purposes. "When I was hired, I brought in my portfolio, and they were very much interested in seeing what I had in it...and it's been mentioned to me 'Are you keeping it up?'...It was never talked about in a staff meeting...I think it's more something for people who are going into leadership."

None of the new teachers reported portfolios as a focus of professional development for staff. Clearly, this is an area that requires greater awareness and collective exploration in order to reap benefits. It has implications for staff developers and administrators in providing support for the innovations that new teachers may be bringing from their preservice teacher education programs, and how these new teachers are supported in the implementation of these innovations. Research has shown that when on-site support or job-embedded learning is available for such

innovation, teachers can cooperatively solve problems associated with implementation (Labonte, Leighty, Mills & True, 1995; Murphy 1995).

Theme 3: The impact of external expectations on portfolio implementation

The presence of external expectations and accountability facilitated the implementation of both professional and student portfolios. When the use of portfolios appeared as a contextual expectation, either by the requirements of a course, or by a district or school, teachers reported using portfolios. Melissa confirmed her continuing use of a professional portfolio when she reported her experiences with an additional qualifications course. "During the summer, I took an additional qualifications primary course and as part of the course requirements, we had to keep a portfolio. I kept the same format." She also reported that teachers were required to maintain professional portfolios as part of her board supervision process. "I've maintained my own portfolio. In this board, teachers have to have portfolios and have to take them to interviews."

Similarly, when the implementation of portfolio assessment with students was an expectation by a district, teachers in their first few months of school reported implementation with students. Melissa reported, "It's part of this board's policy that all students have portfolios…we use them for parent interviews and to showcase students' best work and to show growth over time, although they emphasize best work."

Clearly, the importance of external expectations in supporting innovative practices enhance the possibility that portfolio implementation will occur. That is, where there is policy or procedure alignment, or encouragement of particular assessment practices, chances are greater that new teachers will continue such innovation. Clearly, pressure (i.e., external expectations) and support (i.e., job-embedded) go hand-in-hand.

Theme 4: The challenge of not knowing how to begin portfolio implementation with students

Some new teachers were not quite sure how to begin to implement portfolios with their own students. Through their personal experience in their preservice year with professional portfolios, the data revealed that these first year teachers were clear on how the portfolio process was used with adults. However, new teachers, like Gloria, may have needed more explicit

experience with the actual details of using portfolios with students before they would experiment with their own class. "I didn't really understand...how the teachers taught it".

This finding has implications for preservice teaching as well as for support during first years of teaching. It reinforces the beliefs that learners of all ages require concrete experience with new concepts and processing of these experiences in order to build understanding and confidence. For example, during the preservice year, faculty may need to clearly lay out the process of implementation with students. They need to be very conscious of concrete strategies to use to promote transfer of learning, such as site-supported assignments or selection of practicum sites where support for specific innovations is present and available. Mentors during first years of teaching need to be keenly aware of the need for the one-on-one support and guidance that some new teachers may require as they begin to implement new ideas.

Theme 5: The impact of providing frameworks to support action and reflection

The process outlined in *The Portfolio Organizer*, the structure of the six key images, and the framework "retelling, relating, reflecting" provided support for portfolio implementation, action, and reflection. With many innovations, it is often important to provide support to facilitate early learning. Visual models or frameworks can enhance understanding and provide some structure. Such support can act as a scaffolding that learners use as they construct their new knowledge. For example, the teacher educators used the 10 areas of The Portfolio Organizer to provide the framework or process of implementation for their professional portfolios, and then later was made more explicit during "The Portfolio Institute" in the hopes that it would then be transferred for use with students. This framework increased coherence as new teachers constructed their learning. Terry said, "The Organizer certainly taught us how to use portfolios for ourselves...it was that whole package... I think it's a process... it wasn't just here's how to do it...I'm using it more as a reference [with my own students]."

Some of the first year teachers reported that the structure of the six key images contributed to their understanding and implementation of portfolios. Brandon summed up some benefits at the end of his first year of teaching:

It really helped having that structure, for instance, having those specific categories, like ethics and

legalities, or active learner so I could focus more on important and single events. I think without that structure, what might have happened is, I'd reflect on three or more experiences at once so I wouldn't really have cohesive entries.

Most of the participants, like Yolanda, talked about the use of the 3 R's framework as useful and as a starting point for reflection. "It was an excellent framework for portfolios because in the beginning, I was only retelling…the 3 R's forced me to dig deeper….to think about what my entry was really about…it's an excellent tool to really get to the bottom and meaning of your thinking." Only Stella thought that the 3 R's provided too much structure when people used it too stringently. "One caution is that some people used the structure too much…"

It was interesting to note that once internalized, the 3 R's framework was no longer consciously used or needed but became a process that was used naturally. Clarke mentioned that for him, knowing the framework made his thinking, talking, and writing more evident or explicit. "I think that using the relating, the reflecting, and all that, it's almost embedded in the way that I plan on writing about the artifact. It impacted in the sense that it made it much more explicit."

The data about the three frameworks utilized provided evidence that such models can facilitate understanding and implementation of innovations such as portfolios.

Theme 6: Impact of the pressures on first-year teachers

The challenges and intensive demands of being a first year teacher impacted on the ability to maintain professional portfolios and implement portfolios with students. Many of the teachers in their first few months of teaching, as well as at the end of the school year, described their eagerness and intent to maintain their own professional portfolio and to implement portfolios with their students, but they were overwhelmed with the challenges, the intensive workload, and the extremely busy schedule of being a first year teacher. New teachers, initially very focused on 'self' and their own comfort with teaching, are on a steep learning curve (Robbins, 1999). In survival mode, many spend sleepless nights and have little personal time due to the demands and challenges. Meeting the needs of the curriculum and finding the time to accomplish everything that needed to be done increased anxiety for most of the new teachers in this study. Many of them, like Terry, worked extremely long hours and became physically

exhausted trying to juggle personal and professional lives. "There's just so many things to do, and having a family, you know, I can't be here really late…and I can only take so much work home, because I fall asleep by 8:30 or 9:00…I'm physically drained…with so many pulls on my attention."

At the end of her first year, Gloria, one of the two who did not implement any aspect of student portfolios, confirmed the overwhelming impact of her first year of teaching. "It's not that I wasn't willing to really work hard, or put the effort in. I just think it's an overwhelming experience in our first year, being able to teach all the curriculum, the five strands in math, science, and…in the second year, you know you're going to do it, but the first year, it's a little overwhelming". With many challenges in their first year of teaching, maintaining their own professional portfolio to the same extent that they did in their preservice year, and/or implementing portfolios with students, was a challenge.

Theme 7: Valuing the portfolio process and its benefits

The personal valuing of the portfolio process by candidates in our study was high. Clarke, a kindergarten teacher, saw the portfolio process as one of the most important things teachers can provide for students.

> Using portfolios, through trial and error, or just working with the specific kids you have, each year, you can use it to really get them to see what's important for their own learning, their own learning style, how they like to learn, what they don't like to do, how they like to do things, and the more and more they think about those things, I think the better learners they are going to be. I know that I never had that opportunity when I was a kid….As educators and teachers, I think that's pretty much the most amazing thing you can give someone.

Antoine, an intermediate teacher, highlighted the value he placed on the portfolio process for himself and shared how he saw it benefiting his students in much the same way.

> When I did my own portfolio, I found deep satisfaction… portfolios helped me to see where I wanted to go and how to get there…enabled my own reflections/goal-setting and helped me to make sense from my experience…it's a record of my goals and a package of my learning experience, and my evolution as an educator, and how there's a record of my desire to achieve excellence in everything I do, so it would be that sort of tool for them [my students].

New teachers valued the portfolio process as a positive experience and saw many potential benefits. We explore these benefits in the following sub-themes.

Sub-theme 7.1: Benefits to student and teacher writing

New teachers saw the value/benefits of the portfolio process to their writing program and to their own process of writing. In implementing the professional portfolio during the preservice year, teacher candidates wrote reflections to accompany each artifact selected. These reflections, over time, improved from short, superficial responses to deep and insightful pieces of writing, often many pages in length. Candidates experienced first-hand the process of writing, and in their portfolios, clearly demonstrated their growth in thinking and writing skills.

The understanding that the portfolio enhanced writing was a theme that emerged for all of the teachers that were using portfolios with their students, since they clearly saw the portfolio as a tool for their writing program. Antoine was quick to highlight the benefits of the portfolio for this purpose.

> One of my biggest successes this year was getting my students to understand the writing process, the drafting, editing, revising that's involved in writing...I have them do reflections across the curriculum...whether it's science, or math, or gym...They have to practice the conventions of writing and they reinforce the conventions of writing. It [the portfolio] forces them to write about different things, it forces them to talk about narrative, to talk about exposition, to talk about curriculum expectations...in that sense, it facilitates the teaching of curriculum... portfolios involve writing, it involves creative thought, thinking, it involves retelling, which is getting students to talk about what had happened, getting students to relate, this reminds me of something here, it forces critical thinking, to think for themselves, it has them practising the conventions of writing...it's the language arts curriculum in one little package...

Although Stella did not implement portfolios fully with her students, she shared a clear sense of the potential of the portfolio process for writing.

> We do journal writing...I ask them all sorts of questions, and there's some reflection...I think portfolios can be implemented as an increase to your writing program... portfolios are another way to show them that there are different ways that we can write, and different reasons why we write.

Some, like Clarke, also saw the portfolio as a beneficial tool to help them articulate and record in writing their emerging philosophies as new teachers. Clarke sees this writing and clarifying of his philosophy as a useful tool in illuminating his philosophy and knowing himself as a professional.

> The key reason [for writing portfolio entries] is so that basically it will make your life ten times easier, because if you're reflecting on your practice, on how you're doing, on how you face certain challenges, how you're succeeding, you'll build on it. It's like a staircase. You'll keep going up and up and up , and you'll find that you're not reinventing the wheel and you're enjoying the whole process., the class management, the instruction, all the administrative stuff that you do as a

teacher, the relationship with the parents, all of it will sort of gel in...It's like getting snapshots of your philosophy, and you'll sort of piece it together, and the more you know about yourself, and why you do certain things, the stronger you'll become as a teacher as the years progress.

Sub-theme 7.2: The portfolio for assessment, self-evaluation, goal setting, and reflection

New teachers saw the value/benefits of the portfolio for the assessment and reporting process for students, as well as for self-evaluation, goal-setting, and reflection for themselves and their students. Antoine saw the portfolio as an "an indispensable assessment tool, an indispensable record of growth."

Others, like Jesse, saw the portfolio as essential to the parent interview process.

I knew I would be having parent interviews and I didn't want to be put on the spot if parents came in saying, or ranting and raving, why didn't their child receive this mark. So that's the main reason as to why I did it [portfolios]...It made me more comfortable with the fact that if parents had any say or any arguments about their child's mark...I could just pull it out and say your child is doing fine, or doing well.

Some, like Stella, saw the potential for the portfolio for self-assessment and goal setting.

That's my direct link with portfolios...self-evaluation. I see them [portfolios] as synonymous. That's why portfolios are useful to me, because of the self-evaluation. That just happens to be why I used them...because once you self-evaluate, you see where you are, and of course for me the next logical step is where do you want to go?... My next step is what am I going to do next year to make it better, or tomorrow, what am I going to do to make it better...It makes you a better teacher if you really examine what you've done and where you're going to go with it.

Some, like Roberta and others, used the professional portfolio as a vehicle for reflecting on their personal feelings and experiences, as a way to release their emotions.

I'm using it [the portfolio] to sort of vent out my feelings. I'm using it almost like a journal...It helped me tremendously to put a lot of things into perspective. It's taken weight off my shoulders from always taking the responsibility...so it's easier if I put it on paper, look at it...reflect back on what I've written.

A number mentioned the impact of the portfolio process on student reflection, self-assessment, and growth.

Brandon:
I think that it's really important that students, especially at the middle school level, start reflecting on important events and setting goals because when they go into high school next year, they're going to be expected to take on a lot more responsibility for their actions, so now's the time to get them thinking about some of the things that they're doing really well, and some

problems which they're having right now, some things they should start thinking about finding ways of resolving on their own, because next year, they'll still have support but not as much as this year."

Clarke:
They [my students] will start to understand how they learn and why they learn, and I think once kids understand that, I honestly believe you're opening a door, because then they can just walk through it. They sort of get control of themselves, and ...they start self-assessing, and then they can start using strategies to help them. I think we do that almost unconsciously anyway, but we're just bringing it [self-assessment] to a conscious level. We are just making them aware of it so that they know how they learn and what they'd like to do with learning. They know and I know. It's a partnership.

Sub-theme 7.3: Benefits of portfolios in career plans

New teachers saw the professional portfolio as a useful tool for the interview process and as a step towards their future leadership goals. Some teachers in the study showed great regard for the professional portfolio as a tool for the interview process.

Roberta:
Since I'm still not in a permanent position [am on the occasional teacher roster], I have to keep up my portfolio because I'm going to interviews... makes me realize my values and beliefs and how I've used my ideas...

Clarke:
It was after the portfolio interviews that I realized that, just from a purely professional point of view, how beneficial it (the portfolio process) could be, because in an interview situation, I'd be able to sort of really extrapolate where I was coming from, what my values were, what my philosophy was, and what my classroom would look and sound like, and because with a portfolio, you could include pictures, you could include a tape, and you could pull these things out and hand them to an interview team."

When the professional portfolio was seen as a tool for future leadership, it intensified the desire for new teachers to maintain portfolios. For example, Clarke experienced a workshop where the professional portfolio was highlighted as a tool for leadership and the administrative process, and he reported a renewed interest in maintaining his own portfolio because he saw administrators using and sharing different models, and this provided him with a real purpose for his future goals.

That workshop for the Future Leaders group really opened my eyes... There I was sitting in a room where people were either rookie V.P.s or the first two or three years as V.P.s, and they're showing their portfolios and why it's important and how they've grown...after that workshop, I really really understood. I found out from professionals on the administrative track.

For Clark, seeing the external and long-term goals and purposes for portfolios added importance to maintaining his own portfolio. With the growing demand for teacher leadership and trained administrators, the leadership portfolio may become a key tool for administrator preparation and ongoing professional development (Meadows, Dyal, & Wright, 1997).

Theme 8: Changes in attitude and confidence

A positive attitude change and greater confidence occurred with continued writing, reflection, and use of portfolios for self and with students. A number of participants, like Yolanda, changed their attitude towards portfolios since they were first introduced to them. "I wasn't really understanding so much in the beginning (during the preservice year), but by the end, I found it [the portfolio process] very comfortable and I knew the purpose."

Clarke made some powerful and insightful comments about the portfolio process and how his initial negative attitude towards portfolios had changed over the course of his preservice and first year of teaching.

> Ultimately, the reason why I was so adamantly opposed to it [the portfolio process] initially was really because I had a fear, not a fear of disclosure, but a fear of not wanting to delve into that unconscious and see 'What are the real reasons why I'm in this profession? And what are my driving motivations? What are my passions?'...It's sort of like the idea that it's easier to coast through life, the unexamined life is not worth living...You're not really a full teacher in a sense, because you're not learning anything about yourself, and the reality is that who I am as a self, as Clarke, is who I am as a teacher. There really isn't a separation.... I realize now...using them [portfolios], it will really make me just a stronger person and a better teacher...and wherever I will be in the field, I will be that much more self-assured and confident.

This new teacher saw the portfolio as a tool to know and understand himself better, to discover who he was as a person and professional. He saw the power of the reflective component of the portfolio and emphasized the "connection between that reflective practice and the portfolio as a tool for that reflective practice. They're wedded. They're inseparable".

Overall, an increase in confidence was reported in the new teachers who were using portfolios. The more they used portfolios, both for themselves and with their students, and the more successful they were with them, the more confident they were as teachers. In most cases, overall confidence with teaching was seen to grow by the end of the year with increased experience and competence with the teaching role, enhanced by a feeling of success at mastering

the curriculum and the challenges of the first year. It was interesting to note that the two new teachers who had not used portfolios with their students during their first year indicated a strong intent to pursue the portfolio process in subsequent years given their greater confidence in having one year completed. In all cases, the new teachers ended their first year with greater confidence and the desire to utilize portfolios for themselves and their students.

Discussion and Value to the Field

We believe this study begins to unravel some key questions that we intend to continue to explore in further studies: Will knowledge and experience with a collaborative professional portfolio process in a preservice program lay the groundwork for using portfolios for one's ongoing professional learning? Will experiencing the professional portfolio first-hand during preservice teacher education encourage use of portfolios with students during the first year and subsequent years of teaching?

Some valuable themes and understandings have emerged from this study to guide the ongoing exploration of portfolio use for professional growth and student success. This research also made it clear that, however successful candidates are in creating professional portfolios, it may still be challenging for them as new teachers to transfer their knowledge and experience for use with students unless certain conditions are in place. That is, if teacher colleagues, mentors, and administrators of new teachers are supportive of portfolios and are collaborating together in using portfolios for professional reasons and/or with students, then the chances of implementation rise. In addition, if there is a presence of external expectations or accountability associated with the use of professional or student portfolios (e.g., a district or school focus), these greatly facilitate the use of portfolios by new teachers. For new teachers, establishing priorities and making decisions about use of time is difficult. External expectations can help guide their decision-making.

The utilization of supports such as the process outlined in The Portfolio Organizer, the structure of the six key images, and the framework of "retelling, relating and reflecting" are helpful in guiding action and reflection for new teachers engaged in portfolio work. All three frameworks focus on the cooperative and collaborative dimensions that foster learning. Such frameworks are key to assisting in the development of professional portfolios, and likely

contribute to the success teacher candidates experience with the process. The frameworks provide enough structure to guide their knowledge building, while not restricting the creative and personal approaches to learning.

Finally, the needs and concerns of new teachers, including the intensive demands that they often experience early in their career, may impact on their ability to implement the range of innovations that they might value. If portfolios can be viewed as an integrating strategy that helps them achieve many goals in their programs for students (e.g., curriculum content, instruction, assessment, knowledge of the learner), the chances of implementation success may increase. Our ongoing research will determine how new teachers will reconcile their valuing of portfolios with the practical ever-changing demands of life as an educator.

Professional portfolios have gained greater attention as educators look to this process as an integral part of preservice, inservice, and leadership education. The need to fully understand such a dynamic process is even more critical as more and more programs are being designed to include portfolios. This study and its findings provide important information to an area in need of further research. It is clear that there are practical implications for teacher education programs as well as for career-long professional development.

Clearly, early success with portfolios impacts confidence in use of this assessment tool and increases the chances that future steps might be taken, although a positive first-hand experience does increase motivation to want to use the innovation. Instructors cannot assume the process will unfold with a mere introduction of the portfolio idea, but rather, the process necessitates ongoing guidance, input, monitoring, encouragement, and collaborative support. As well, we realize that practical experience during the preservice year with the process of professional portfolios may not be enough to help new teachers bridge the gap to implementing portfolios with students. More specific instruction, concrete examples and actual use of portfolios with students during the preservice year may be necessary in order for greater transfer to occur during first year teaching.

The transfer of any innovation introduced in a teacher education program needs to be grounded in the contexts within which new teachers work. Partnerships and collaborative work with associate teachers and schools hosting teacher education programs can increase support for teacher candidate experimentation and learning of specific innovations like portfolios. However, such support is for naught if similar support is not available in the schools and districts as new

teachers enter the profession. We encourage teacher educators to be engaged in following their graduates in the early stages of their careers in order to better determine the enablers and challenges of the transfer of learning.

This study has encouraged us to think further about the value and many benefits of a collaborative portfolio process, and has pushed our thinking about the role they can play in promoting ongoing professional learning. We look forward to continued research to explore this process further.

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