Orientation & Training Division

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION
Module: 4
Topic: Responding to Children's Success: Portfolios

Taken from Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community

In this module, participants learn about the purpose of and strategies for ongoing assessment. They also learn to use portfolios to maintain current information about a child's development and progress.

Outcomes

As a result of completing this module, participants will be able to:

✴ Implement an ongoing assessment system that documents each child's progress and changing characteristics in a portfolio that includes screening and ongoing assessment results, samples of the child's work, completed checklists, ongoing observation notes, family provided information, photographs, and other data demonstrating the child's progress;

✴ Select work samples that represent a child's skills and interests to be included in an individual portfolio; and

✴ Collaborate with families to review each child's progress, set new goals, and plan individualized strategies for encouraging development at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and /or during group socialization sessions.

Key Concepts

The key concepts of this training activity that support the skills needed for crisis prevention include:

* Children learn and develop continuously. To implement an individualized curriculum, staff and families need up-to-date information about a child's skills, needs, interests, and abilities.

* Portfolios record and document children's progress and changing characteristics; describe how they learn and develop social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills;

* Families can contribute to portfolios by providing samples of their child's work and their ongoing observation recordings of the child's changing characteristics and use of new skills in all domains.

* Staff-family conferences are opportunities to thoroughly examine a child's progress as documented in the portfolio, assess program effectiveness, set new goals, and plan strategies to encourage further development at home and in Head Start settings.

Background Information

Through ongoing assessment staff and families collect information about the child's changing interests, needs, and progress toward meeting developmental goals. Head Start staff and families use strategies for ongoing assessment that range from ongoing observations to checklists to anecdotal reports to collections of children's work. Ongoing assessment documents each child's progress and identifies changing interests and needs. It provides up -to-date information about each child's unique characteristics, which is used to plan and implement an individualized curriculum. Ongoing assessment is built into the daily, weekly, and long-term planning process of an individualized child development program.

For many years, early childhood educators used standardized achievement and readiness test to assess children's progress and determine their readiness for kindergarten. However, more recently, many early childhood professionals have determined that these testing methods do not provide sufficient, adequate information for measuring children's progress, in part because they do not reflect the ways in which young children learn. Standardized test can be one part of the ongoing assessment process; however, they should be supplemented with other sources of information.

Portfolios

Many early childhood professionals now advocate the use of portfolios as a developmental appropriate alternative to standardized test for measuring young children's progress. Portfolios include information about a child that was collected from a number of sources such as ongoing observations recordings, screening and/or in-depth developmental assessments, and anecdotal records. They can include checklists, photographs, and summaries of conversations with families. Work samples - examples of children's work that were saved as records of the children's progress – are a major components of each child's portfolio. These items record and document a child's progress through the curriculum and serve as a dynamic history of how children learn and develop social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language skills.

Portfolios also document interests, pinpoint potential areas of need, and describe how life experience may be affecting the child's growth and development. Portfolios can demonstrate results of the individualized plans for children with disabilities. They are also the mainstay of ongoing assessment. Portfolios serve three major purposes.

Portfolios Are Used to Share Information

Portfolios are a natural vehicle for *sharing information*. Agendas for staff-family conferences are home visits can originate in the profile of the child's ongoing development found in the portfolio. In addition, the portfolio may contain answers to questions raised at the conference. For example, Mr. and Mrs. F. want to know if Renee, who attends the infant-toddler center at a Head Start migrant program, will benefit from the materials and activities in the preschool classroom when the crops are in and the family moves upstream. Her portfolio includes a checklist assessment of skills, examples of scribbles that she wrote spontaneously, and a log of books Renee enjoyed at home and at the center. In addition, anecdotal observations and running records document Renee's growing motor skills, mastery of self-help skills, and her creative approach to problem solving. In fact, there are probably dozens of items in the portfolio about Renee's skills and interests.

Portfolios Are Use for Planning

Education staff and families can also use portfolios for *planning*. Because the portfolio is a dynamic record of a child's progress, it is an ongoing source of information that can be used for individualizing. Staff and families use screening and ongoing assessment information as the basis of their original plans for individualizing. They use information from portfolios to regularly update goals and plans for each child. In some instances, reviewing portfolios lead staff and families to identify signs that a child has a healthy and/or developmental problem that was not identified during the screening process. The

child can then be referred for an evaluation so the problem can be diagnosed and addressed.

Portfolios Support Transition

Portfolios can be used for *supporting a child's transition* from Early Head Start to Head Start to another program or elementary school. With parental permission, the portfolio often accompanies the child to the new setting. This allows the child's new teachers and administrators to offer an appropriate curriculum. Portfolios that accurately represent a child's background, skills, interests, and needs will continue to inform staff and families long after the child has left Head Start.

Maintaining Confidentiality

When a program begins portfolios, it is important to establish safeguard for ensuring confidentiality. As a rule, only persons with a need to know should have access to a child's portfolio.

Please complete the quiz on the following pages.

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⭐QUIZ

1. **Standardized tests or portfolios can be used to assess a child's progress since these are interchangeable.**

    _____ True   _____ False

2. **Education staff and families can also use portfolios for planning, because the portfolio is a dynamic record of a child's progress.**

    _____ True   _____ False

3. **Portfolios aid transition because they show what a child has done, but they must not be used to plan curriculum in a new setting.**

    _____ True   _____ False

4. **Only persons with a need to know should have access to a child's portfolio.**

    _____ True   _____ False

5. **Family has access to their child's portfolio only during parent conferences.**

    _____ True   _____ False

6. **With parental permission, the portfolio often accompanies the child to the new setting.**

    _____ True   _____ False

7. **Portfolios include information about a child that was collected from a number of sources such as ongoing observations recordings, screening and/or in-depth developmental assessments, and anecdotal records.**

    _____ **True**   _____ **False**

8. **Portfolios are the only assessment tool used to regularly update goals and plans for each child.**

    _____ **True**   _____ **False**

9. **Ongoing assessment is built into the daily, weekly, and long-term planning process of an individualized child development program.**

    _____ **True**   _____ **False**

10. **Portfolios cannot demonstrate results of the individualized plans for children with disabilities.**

    _____ **True**   _____ **False**

Name: Date:

Username: Password: