



Organize your homeschool with portfolios in mind

By Annette Mehl, Cape Coral, Florida

PORTFOLIO – the very word strikes fear in many homeschooling hearts. But what exactly is this obscure entity? According to Webster, a portfolio is “a portable case for loose papers.” (I like Webster; short, sweet and to the point!)

Why do we even need a portfolio in the first place? We keep a portfolio for two reasons. The first reason is that if you are registered with the local school superintendent, the law requires you to keep a portfolio for each child you are homeschooling. The second reason is to keep your homeschool program organized and documented.

The homeschool law states that a portfolio must contain:

1. A log of educational activities which is made contemporaneously with the instruction and which designates by title any reading materials used.
 2. Samples of any writings, worksheets, workbooks, or creative materials used or developed by the student.
-

What exactly does a portfolio look like? This is where your creativity comes in! A portfolio can look like just about anything – a three-ring binder or a detailed scrapbook album or anything in between (as long as it’s organized).

A great word to remember while you are compiling a portfolio is “SAMPLE.” Though you may be tempted to keep every sheet of paper that bears your child’s handwriting, just include a sample per month from each area that you are teaching.

Let me share some of the components I choose to incorporate in my second and fourth grader’s portfolios. Not all are required by law, but are an integral part of our homeschool program. They are basically put together with the following divided sections:

- Reading book list – We include the date a book was read/finished, title and author’s name. Older students may be asked to write a brief book report or narrative. (If you are using a packaged curriculum, you may include the titles of the reading books in that series.)
- Experiment log sheet – Include the date, what you did/made, what were the results (like the time we made bubble gum from a kit or when we found a recipe

for Flubber or a Magic School Bus activity...).

- Field trip log – Include the date, where we visited, why did we go there, what did we see or learn. Use photographs, pamphlets, tickets or your child’s drawing of their favorite part of the trip.
- Lesson plans – For this, I use a spreadsheet that has the days of the week (all seven – not just Monday through Friday) across the top and the subjects I teach along the left side. It’s easy to use and we can see the week’s work at a glance.
- Subject dividers – I often print worksheets from the Internet or make my own. When the boys have completed the worksheets and we have reviewed them together, I put them in the appropriate section (math, science, writing, critical thinking...). This is also great for those worksheet pages that accidentally get ripped out of the workbook or for work the kids have completed while attending a co-op.

There are many ways to put together a homeschooler’s portfolio, but however you decide, be sure that your student participates in its creation. Have your student write out the experiment log sheet or the field trip sheet. Allow your student

to choose some of the papers that will be put in the portfolio for review (the good and the not-so good ones).

To really personalize it for your child, ask him/her to design the cover page or decorate the section dividers.

There are some great resources out there to help you get started – from pre-made kits to web sites to books (see resource box below). Your homeschooling friends can also be a resource, ask them what they have done. So don't panic, you can and will be successful in keeping a portfolio if you look at it as an opportunity to keep a lasting record of the great adventure you and your child(ren) are taking! □

Annette and her husband are homeschooling their three children in District 9. Both she and her husband are Florida-certified teachers and appreciate the personalized attention that homeschooling offers their children.

RESOURCES

The Guide to Homeschooling in Florida contains additional information on portfolios. See it online at www.fpea.com or contact FPEA for a free copy.

A Garden Patch of Reproducible Homeschooling Planning & Educational Worksheets, * by Debora McGregor, is a book of forms for unit studies, evaluations, book reports, journals, portfolios, time lines, science reports, math charts, field trips, schedules, award charts...more! Over 90 reproducible forms are available in CD ROM format so you can fill in the blanks on your computer, then print it out.

The Streamlined Portfolio Handbook, * by Brenda Boydston takes an indepth look at a system of organizing and compiling a student's records and work samples in a concise and efficient manner that demonstrates academic progress, but not too burdensome to maintain.

Although they may be purchased from other vendors, both of these resources are available through Rock Solid, Inc., 800-705-3452, www.rocksolidinc.com.



1-800-473-2920

www.waterfordacademy.com
7687 S.W. 103rd Loop
Ocala, FL 34476

**For the advancement of your
homeschool student**

- Gifted program
- Homeschool program
- Independent study program
- Local, national and international enrollment
- Full private school benefits without private school cost



Nationwide Dental and Benefits Plan

includes: *Vision, Prescription & Chiropractic*

\$11.95 / mo. individual \$19.95 / mo. entire household

*All pre-existing conditions OK * Braces are covered * Save 25 - 80% *

Enrollment and Provider info: www.mybenefitsplus.com/nationwide

Have you given up your job and income in order to homeschool ?

Work your own hours from home and earn immediate income while sharing this much-needed Benefits Plan: www.iboplus.com/retirein3years

e-mail: nationwidebenefits@earnware.net Toll free: 877 546-8640

ASSOCIATE OF ARTS FROM A Christian College

- Ranked among "America's Best Christian Colleges" and "America's Best College Buys"
- Classes taught by Christian faculty
- Earn a two-year degree from a Christian perspective
- Classes meet twice a week
- Full-time format still allows for flexibility in student's schedule
- Financial aid is available for all who qualify
- Classes now forming at the Orlando campus

DUAL ENROLLMENT

Beginning January 2001, Dual Enrollment courses will be offered for students who want to get a jump-start on their college career!

Toll Free
877-804-1424
(ext.225)

BELHAVEN COLLEGE

www.Belhaven.edu/Orlando

Undergraduate Programs • Graduate Programs • Adult Degree Completion • Continuing Education • Dual Enrollment