

Guideposts for Success: Lesson Plans and Activities

Developed by the Institute for Educational Leadership

LESSON 11: CAREER PORTFOLIOS

AT-A-GLANCE

A career portfolio is another tool students can use to showcase their skills, knowledge and capabilities. For some students, this is a creative way for them to tell someone what they may have difficulty describing on paper (or in person). Not all employers will welcome a career portfolio (truth be told, some may not know what to do with it 😊) in addition to a resume, but the process students use to create a portfolio is one of tremendous value. Portfolios are more appropriately used on interviews...at a time where a student would be discussing their accomplishments. The portfolio can be quite a compelling tool, as it shows evidence of competence.

LESSON

This activity is intended to be an INTRODUCTION to portfolio development – and to get students thinking about how to create a portfolio as they focus on their career development.

Discuss: Portfolios document your accomplishment both in and out of school in ways that a resume cannot. A portfolio doesn't take the place of a resume, but can be a tool that may impress a potential employer during an interview. It can even be used as you apply to college!

A portfolio is a collection of the best examples of your work. It may include sample documents of work you have done, pictures of your work or of you completing the work, and more. No matter what type of career you are interested in, a portfolio will show how you stand out. For example (for illustration):

- If you want to be a chef, consider including things such as your own recipes, pictures of your specialties, training certificates, and so on.
- If you are trying to work in an office as a bookkeeper, consider including a list of the software you are familiar with, samples of spreadsheets you have created, and a letter of recommendation from your statistics or accounting teacher.
- If you want to work in the construction field, include photos of yourself completing projects in your technology class, a letter from your instructor indicating your ability to meet deadlines and safety training certificates.
- If you want to be an environmental engineer, take pictures of your volunteer work cleaning local streams, pictures of your science fair project where you analyzed recycling data, and a letter of recommendation from your biology teacher.

So, consider a career dream...a career goal...or a chosen career path. Students should research this career and document the knowledge, skills, and abilities required—and begin to think about and document about what they could document that would demonstrate they have the capability to do (or learn) the job. For example, if the job requires education, take a digital picture of your high school diploma or academic awards you've received. If the career requires

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strength and endurance, document the fact that you were on the track team.

Use Activity 11.1 to help students begin to identify what would go into their portfolio, what their portfolio would look like and what types of media they would use to represent it.

Though it's encouraged for all students to create their own career portfolio, not all students will want to or will feel comfortable doing so. Encourage them to consider creating one (as more of a scrapbook) for a friend or a family member—or to help another student create theirs.

EXTENSION

For students who enjoy working with media and technology, encourage them to take digital pictures, create a portfolio website, or a video. Students could also create a video of “how to create a portfolio” for future use.

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ACTIVITY 11.1 - THE CAREER PORTFOLIO

Use this form to plan for the creation of your career portfolio.

A career portfolio is designed to make it easy for you to display your best work and accomplishments. Employers and college admissions staff may use a portion of your portfolio to judge or evaluate your academic ability, maturity, skills and motivation.

A “typical” career portfolio contains (at minimum) the following:

- Letter of introduction
- Resume
- Letters of recommendation (3 recommended)
- Samples of your work
- High school transcript, awards, certificates and credentials
- Other documents pertaining to your personal interests and achievements

Questions to ask yourself as you consider developing a career portfolio include:

Letter of introduction: *No longer than 1 typed page*

<i>Considerations</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>If I need help, I will ask:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Why am I interested in this position/college? – What are my career goals? What skills do I have that would make me successful in this career or college? – Why should I be hired (by an employer) or accepted (by a college)? 		

Resume: *A written summary of your personal qualifications*

<i>Considerations</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>If I need help, I will ask:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Important facts: who are you, how can you be contacted (mail, telephone, email), what are your experiences? – What skills do you have? – What should an interviewer know about you? – What achievements can you highlight? 		

Letters of Recommendation: *Only ask someone for a letter of recommendation if you think they will say good things about you ☺. You will need to formally ask your contact for a letter of recommendation. You can do this by phone, in writing, email or in person.*

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Letters of recommendation (cont).

<i>Considerations</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>If I need help, I will ask:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When you consider whom to ask, think about who you know (who knows you well) who could talk about some of the following: your character, work ethic, motivation and enthusiasm, technical/career-related/or academic experience. - Be sure to thank the person for taking the time to write a letter for your portfolio. 		

Samples of your work: *Here is where you can be the most creative! You can take pictures of you performing tasks such as community service or of projects you've completed in addition to other samples of work. Remember, these items should be relevant to the position you are seeking or the school to which you are applying.*

<i>Considerations</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>If I need help, I will ask:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What academic or technical work have I done that shows my competence (research papers, science or computer projects, etc.?) -What activities do I do that represent my competence, enthusiasm, etc.? Scouts, 4-H, community service, volunteer work, paid work? 		

Transcripts, awards, certifications/credentials, etc.: *You don't need to insert the original document, but a clean photocopy or a digital picture should suffice (be sure to include a description of the picture)*

<i>Considerations</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>If I need help, I will ask:</i>
Items to consider including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High school transcript - PSAT/SAT scores - Honors/school awards - Citizenship awards - Sports awards - Driver's license - CPR or first aid certification - MORE 		

Final considerations: How will you portray your portfolio? In a 3-ring binder, in a website version, etc. This is your chance to show your uniqueness!