

Figure 5.1:

Family Recognition Portfolio-Representing Your Child's Talents

With your child, prepare a small selection of your child's work to best tell the story of your child's special capabilities and learning interests.

Schools want to provide opportunities for children to learn as much as they are ready and able to learn. Your insight about the learning your child demonstrates at home can heighten educators' recognition of your child's special capabilities and learning interests. Product examples increase the likelihood that your perception of your child's capabilities is understood and appreciated inasmuch as the products illustrate the depth and complexity of the emerging talents you observe.

Some products may represent a potential for advanced work. Such products demonstrate high-levels of thinking and content as they call attention to your child's ability to process and reorganize information in a way that is unique for that age or grade level. The products may also substantiate your child's interest and expertise in topics that are not typical for peers.

How To Begin

- Use the school-provided pocket folder as a portfolio container to organize a representative sample of the products your child produces. Photographs can be used to represent large items, three-dimensional pieces, or to provide a record of activities and performances.
- Keep the portfolio small. Five to eight items are probably sufficient to represent emerging talents. A sampling of carefully selected products makes a more thoughtful presentation than a large scrapbook approach. Educators have demanding workloads and can be more attentive to a meaningful sample.
- Your child or you should attach a dated caption to each product to briefly explain why that piece was selected and what is specifically demonstrated through that product or during the process of completing that product. Some portfolio caption forms are provided if you want to use them (Figure 5.2).
- If you wish, you can write or vocally record a brief description of additional exceptional behaviors frequently displayed by your child, such

as independent thinking, problem solving, persistence, and unexpected or complex questions about topics or concepts. You are in a unique position to recount to others the process as well as the products of your child's learning.

- Give the completed portfolio to your child's teacher. It will be returned at a later date so you have this keepsake from this process.
- Enjoy this interaction with your child. Celebrating learning efforts and interests is a wonderful way to spend time together. It emphasizes to family members, school personnel, and your child the value your family places on your child's continued learning.

Portfolio Product Examples

Use these examples to prompt ideas of the types and range of products that might be appropriate in your child's portfolio. This chart of products is not inclusive of all of the kinds of work that could be selected and is not intended to dictate which products to include. Rather, the list is a compilation of products that proved helpful in the past in providing insightful information to help school personnel understand a child.

Collaborate with your child to select products that are an integral reflection of what your child knows, loves, and continues to learn rather than artificial activities and isolated skills. Let the portfolio represent the main idea you want educators to understand about your child.

Your child must complete products selected for a portfolio without assistance for two important reasons. The most significant reason is because your child's self-esteem is influenced by his or her competent personal achievements. Remaking products into adult projects risks children developing feelings of doubt and ambiguity about their abilities. Secondly, the portfolio is taken more seriously when the products look child-appropriate rather than adult-level perfect. Educators are suspicious of products that suggest extensive adult intervention.

PRODUCT	EXPLANATION <i>What is it?</i>	PURPOSE <i>What is the value in a portfolio?</i>
Art	Select art pieces that demonstrate your child's natural, creative explorations and interpretations rather than craft projects.	Art reflects cultural understanding, perspective, development levels, interests, graphic talents, abstract thinking, and creativity.
Audio Recording	Make a two to three minute recording of your child's explanation of advanced concepts, philosophical viewpoints, musical creations, problem solutions, or original ideas.	Audio recordings verify general vocabulary and academic language pursuant to a specific content area, such as math or science. Recordings also reveal fluency, creativity, high-order thinking, and concept depth.
Computer	Document computer skills through applications of more sophisticated software, programs, or products created by the child.	Computer-generated products indicate computer literacy, analysis, content-related academic skills, and applied concepts.
Dictations	Write your child's dictated explanation of a product or process. Prompt these dictations with statements, such as, "Tell me one or two things about this work," or "Tell me how you did that."	Dictations increase understanding of the why and how of what children do. It elicits the child's perspective and may indicate advanced vocabulary, high-level thinking, fluency, and content depth.
Drawing or sketching information	Some children draw complex sketches or create symbols that effectively represent their observations and interpretations of data.	Sketching allows a child to record information and insights with less handwriting skill. It may indicate abstract thinking and/or more complex levels of understanding.
Graphs, charts, or maps	Some children produce visual organizations to represent relationships, formulate problems, illustrate math solutions, and demonstrate the results of independent investigations.	Graphic organizers promote interpretations, visual-spatial skills, and demonstrate specific concepts applied in the task. High-level thinking, data recording strategies, and organizational skills may also be evident.
Mathematical or Scientific Investigations	Photograph or provide products from tasks that required the child to use more complex skills and concepts to solve a problem beyond memorized facts, such as an original math proof or experiment.	Original investigations can document interests, concept acquisition, and problem solving beyond expected levels.
Photographs	Photograph your child's performances, creative projects, sculptures, constructions, experiments, models, original math patterns, or organizational systems.	Photographs can highlight process and effectively represent quite large or three-dimensional products. They provide a record when no paper product is feasible.
Reading level	Provide the material, the title, or a duplicated page from one or two examples of books or printed material your child selects to read independently (not material your child has memorized). Include	Not all children read and interpret advanced-level materials. However, many children demonstrate their interests and depth of understanding through the nonfiction materials they choose. Since advanced learning

	your child's reflection of the text to demonstrate analysis skills.	opportunities often require reading independence, educators are interested in students' reading levels and choices of reading materials.
Research	High-ability students usually demonstrate a depth of information and expertise beyond age-level expectations in one or more topics or content areas. Share examples of the independent studies individually selected and pursued by your child. This study does not need to look like a research report because children devise many varied ways to share their conclusions. It must represent a child's original thinking and conclusions and not be material copied from text or the Internet.	Research products developed by the child reveal specific interests, content depth, inferences, levels of complexity, and expertise beyond grade level. The product also demonstrates how the learner understands to synthesize and represent the information.
Videos	Brief videos of two or three minutes are wonderful ways to document performing arts and your child's learning process. Encourage your child to plan and time the presentation as further examples of high-level thinking skills.	A video presents a significant visual record of a child's behaviors and integration of skills. When recording group interactions, a video can demonstrate interpersonal and leadership skills.
Written products	Provide examples of original works created by your child, including reports, scientific observations, problem solutions, letters, stories, poems, or reflections.	Written products may demonstrate advanced language, thinking skills, organization, the construction of meaning, concept depth, and complexity.

Figure 5.2: Family Recognition Portfolio Caption

Child: _____ Date: _____

Family representative: _____ Relationship: _____

This is: _____

I selected this because: _____

It shows: _____

I think: _____

