Portfolios:
What good are they?
What are they good for?

Think pair share: What are portfolios?

ORIGIN early 18th cent.: from Italian *portafogli*, from *portare ‘carry’ + foglio ‘sheet of paper’* (from Latin *folium*).

Oxford:
- a large, thin, flat case for loose sheets of paper such as drawings or maps.
- a set of pieces of creative work collected by someone to display their skills, esp. to a potential employer.
- a varied set of photographs of a model or actor intended to be shown to a potential employer.

Merriam-Webster
1: a hinged cover or flexible case for carrying loose papers, pictures, or pamphlets
2 [from the use of such a case to carry documents of state]: the office and functions of a minister of state or member of a cabinet
3: the securities held by an investor: the commercial paper held by a financial house (as a bank)
4: a set of pictures (as drawings or photographs) usually bound in book form or loose in a folder
5
: a selection of a student's work (as papers and tests) compiled over a period of time and used for assessing performance or progress

**Ask group their level of experience with portfolios:**

Currently use in your classes: traditional paper? E?
Use for program evaluation
Have used in the past. not using now
Am interested, Have never used.

Jan says:

A response to testing too narrowly. Testing too few aspects.

Tests are meant to be Context Free.

Too little of what is being learned is being tested. Tests are easy, efficient and economical. Good for measuring knowledge: facts, formulas, vocabulary, spelling, etc.

IMO this is not the important stuff. Brunner agrees. Puts it at the bottom.

Knowing about is not the same as knowing within. (Reimer, 2006)

Not good for assessing skill or critical thinking. Even the five paragraph essay is becoming less skillful.

“the footprints of a students development” (Miller, 1993)

**think and share: name some kinds of portfolios**
Kinds - think of four P's

**Presentation** “best works” finished student work, hopefully of high quality - gatekeeper for job, admissions, certification, promotion, etc. of an individual. The “logical summative experience” for some long term endeavor.

**Product:** same piece of work done by different people. Takes a snapshot. Useful for ranking or sorting programs, teachers, districts.

**Program:** best work from a group; for example undergraduate teacher education candidates; prospective accountants, journalism majors. Writers – would that students had to assemble a portfolio to demonstrate that they can write effectively in order to be admitted – and to show growth in order to be graduated.

**Process:** Project Zero Howard Gardner (perhaps via Ellen Winner? Pillow talk? ) for demonstrating growth (or learning) over time in the eighties; became popular in the early 1990’s but were cumbersome and harder to evaluate: *not easy or efficient or economical.*

Just better in many ways, in my opinion. Tells much more that a one shot test.

A collection of drafts, early attempts, failures, revisions, etc as well as the resulting product. Includes student reflections on the process. *Production, perception and reflection.*
These should really precede best work (performance) portfolios.

In many ways, this is where all the push for rubrics came from: people were looking for consistent ways to score portfolios.

Then someone figured out that if you shared the rubrics with students, they did a better job.

Now let’s pause a moment and talk about rubrics.

They are only needed for complex tasks. Never use a rubric where a checklist will do. Include checklists in the portfolios.

Use them only for things where there is not one correct answer but many and with many variations.

However, there are drawbacks to rubrics as well.

Stravinsky’s symphonic works would not have fared well if assessed on a rubric designed for Beethoven’s symphonies – or even Mahler.

Picasso would not have fared well on a rubric designed for Monet.

Many examples of this. We all know of work that we recognized as creative and original that did not follow the directions. Rubrics reward following directions.

Creativity knows the directions, understand them and then goes off in another direction on purpose.
This is being stifled in today's schools where the focus is on training, NOT on education. There is no room for creativity on a multiple choice test.

Portfolios do allow for at least a little creativity, ingenuity and personalization. You'll see that when we take you to the circus this afternoon.

Assessing portfolios – and designing rubrics that assist with that requires experts with skills in both critical and realistic thinking. Not fair to judge sophomores by the same expectations as grad students.

Politicians often think anyone can assess work and that is true of multiple choice tests.

It is not true of science fairs, concerts, art shows, one act play contests, debates, public speaking contests and many other real life valuable educational experiences.

Experts have a role to play – yes, my opinion is more valuable that Mitt Romney's when it comes to the quality of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir even if he has heard them more than I. I have probably heard a great many more choirs and have deeper musical expertise.

Means much more than the grade at the end of the class: talk about my summer class and weebly briefcases.

By tracking student reflections over time, we have a record of the broad range of creating, thinking, and revising that happens as students acquire skills. It is not just about the knowledge. It is what they know AND are able to do.
So what are the plusses and minuses?  
Think pair share on this.

Then Jan be sure these are included:

**Advantages of Portfolio Assessment**
- Can promote student self-evaluation, reflection, and critical thinking.
- Can measure performance based on genuine samples of student work.
- Can provide flexibility for students
- Can enable share the responsibility for setting learning goals and for evaluating progress toward meeting those goals.
- Can allow measurement of multiple dimensions of student progress

**Disadvantages of Portfolio Assessment**
- Requiring extra time to plan an assessment system and conduct the assessment.
- Gathering all of the necessary data and work samples can takes time and adds work
- Can easily degenerate into a random collection of student work
- Scoring portfolios involves the extensive use of subjective evaluation procedures such as rating scales and professional judgment, and this limits reliability.

I want students who are ever-developing and ever deepening their own developmental processes. I try to model that and to see to it that I stop once in a while and reflect on those processes myself.
What are they? The four P’s: performance, product, program, and process

What are they good for? Lots of things. It depends on what you want then to do: I want growth over time. The state of New York wants teacher competency. CAEP and NCATE want program evaluation. How about you? What do you want?

Discuss if time allows. If not then afternoon.