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An Investigation of Kindergarten, First and Second Grade Teachers' Implementation of Portfolios

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AN INVESTIGATION OF KINDERGARTEN, FIRST AND SECOND GRADE TEACHERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF PORTFOLIOS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' familiarity and use of portfolios as well as their concerns about portfolio use. This information is important because it may affect how portfolios are implemented in these classrooms and the degree of success that teachers report in portfolio use. Information about teacher concerns and teacher familiarity and use of portfolios was collected through the use of a survey developed by Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) and adapted for this study. The survey focused on familiarity and use of portfolios, contents of portfolios, and teacher concerns about portfolios. The relationships among the variables were analyzed using chi-square tests for independence. The results of this study indicated that there is a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' extent of familiarity with portfolios and their portfolio use. There was also a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' background in portfolio use through in-service sessions and their implementation of portfolios in their classrooms.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background/Significance of the Problem

In 1988, the National School Boards Association joined the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the Association for Childhood Education International and the National Association of Elementary School Principals in recommending that group standardized tests no longer be used with young children. Among the many problems associated with the use of these types of tests were the following: test results are often not a good reflection of the child's abilities; the tests themselves are frequently incompatible with current theory and research about how children learn; and use of these tests seems to lead to an increasingly academic (and inappropriate) curriculum for young children (NAEYC, 1988).

As a result of these criticisms, educators of young children have begun to explore other methods of assessing children's growth and learning. One approach to assessment which has received a good deal of support from practitioners is "authentic assessment", which means the examination of a child's abilities in real life situations (Meyer, 1992). To collect information about the child's abilities, a portfolio for each child is constructed. In this portfolio will be work samples chosen by the teacher as well as the student, notes related to classroom observations, checklists, and interviews.

A review of the literature indicates that very little research has been done on the concerns that teachers have about portfolio use as a means of assessment or on the relationship of teachers' familiarity with portfolio assessment and their actual use of this approach. This study examines these issues by means of a survey of kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' views on various aspects of portfolio use.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' familiarity and use of portfolios as well as their concerns about portfolio use.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' extent of familiarity with portfolios and portfolio use?
2. Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' level of concern about portfolios and portfolio use?
3. Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' extent of familiarity with portfolios and teachers' level of concern about portfolios?
4. Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' teaching experience and portfolio use?
5. Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' level of education and portfolio use?

6. a. Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' background in portfolio use through college courses and portfolio use?

b. Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' background in portfolio use through in-service sessions and portfolio use?

Operational Definition of Terms

Portfolios: A collection of selected student work that serves as the basis for on-going evaluation. It is systematic and organized, used by the teacher, child and parent to monitor growth of the child's knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Concerns: The level of concern of kindergarten, first and second grade teachers about portfolios as measured by a survey written by Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991). Concern ranged from "a very serious concern" to "no concern." See Appendix C for Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) survey and Appendix D for adapted survey.

Familiarity: The extent of familiarity of kindergarten, first and second grade teachers with portfolios as measured by a survey written by Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991). Familiarity ranged from "extremely" to "I'm not." See Appendix C for Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) survey and Appendix D for adapted survey.

Implementation: Portfolio use by kindergarten, first and second grade teachers as measured by a survey written by Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991).

Implementation was measured by yes or no. See Appendix C for Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) survey and Appendix D for adapted survey.

Standardized Tests: A test composed of empirically selected items that is to be used in a specific way, is based on adequately determined norms, and is backed by data on its reliability and its validity (Brewer, 1995, p. 441).

Authentic Assessment: Assessing children's performance in real-life context (Meyer, 1992).

Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade practices that reflect what is known about how children develop and learn (what is age appropriate) and practices that are sensitive to individual and cultural variation (what is individually appropriate) (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992).

Assumptions

1. It is assumed that the kindergarten, first and second grade teachers from Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts within a 30-mile radius in Southeast Central Nebraska are competent enough to make reliable and valid judgments regarding portfolios.
2. It is assumed that the Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) survey is a valid one.

Limitations

1. Only kindergarten, first and second grade teachers from Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts within a 30-mile radius in

Southeast Central Nebraska listed by the 1994-1995 Nebraska Education directory were used as the source of data; therefore, some teachers may be omitted.

2. The subjects were not randomly selected.

3. This is a small sample of rural and semi-rural Southeast Central Nebraska teachers, and the reader must use caution when generalizing the results to larger populations.

Delimitations

Only public elementary schools in Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts within a 30-mile radius in Southeast Central Nebraska were selected as part of the study.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This review will examine the history of assessment in kindergarten and the primary grades with special attention given to standardized testing practices. The review will also include an overview of how young children learn, the relationship of assessment to learning and the practice of portfolio assessment.

The History of Assessment

For many years most evaluation of children has been done through standardized testing. In the 1930s, a majority of schools across the country were engaged in some form of standardized testing, but the scope was extremely small by today's standards. Few people who completed high school before 1950 took more than three standardized tests in their entire school careers and results of these tests were seldom discussed (Perrone, 1990). By contrast, students who completed high school in 1989 took 18 to 21 standardized tests during their school careers.

After 1950, standardized tests were used increasingly more often for selection and retention purposes. Still, at least up to 1965, their use would be described as minimal by today's standards (Perrone, 1990). In addition, prior to 1965, tests were not often used in the early grades. This is important to understand. There was a consensus associated with the traditions of the kindergarten and the developmental orientation held by many kindergarten and

primary grade teachers that these early years were "special," a time for natural growth and development (Perrone, 1990).

However, in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, the use of standardized tests increased substantially at all levels including kindergarten and the primary grades. Teachers who once believed that assessment of young children should have a developmental focus became increasingly discouraged as more and more tests became available for use with young children (Kamii, 1990).

In the 1980s, the "back-to-the-basics" movement which involved an increased emphasis on teaching the 3Rs - reading, writing and arithmetic, meant that teaching and evaluation methods or assessment intended for older students were imposed on younger students. For example, basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic that were usually taught in a first grade classroom were now being taught in kindergarten. A child's day consisted of doing more: more worksheets, more homework, more tests. As a part of the back-to-the-basics movement, school districts wanted evidence that students were in fact improving their skills in the 3Rs. Once again, the standardized test seemed the easiest and most efficient way to get this information. Tests were also used more and more to determine children's readiness to enter and leave kindergarten and also to determine the placement of children. This practice has been described as early tracking (NAEYC, 1988; Bredekamp & Shepard, 1989).

In 1985, Georgia became the first state to require 6-year-olds to pass a standardized test before entering first grade (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989). More

than two dozen other states proposed similar legislation. Five-year-olds who used to spend their days using their creativity and exploring their environment were working on ditto sheets, preparing for the big exam. Teachers would spend a month just teaching children how to take the test (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989). "Readiness" tests were being given to children about to enter kindergarten. These tests concentrated on academic skills children should know or be able to perform before they came to school. Tests determined who would enter kindergarten. They also dictated the kindergarten curriculum to a large extent. By the late 1980s, widespread concern was voiced by many teachers and others involved in the education of young children who recognized the negative effects that inappropriate programming and inappropriate testing practices were having on children. The most influential expression of this concern was published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the form of guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp, 1987). This document describes the importance of matching the curriculum to the developmental level of the children in the class and the best ways to accomplish this. A subsequent publication of this organization provides a detailed account of how to develop curriculum and assessment practices which are well suited to the ways in which children learn (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992).

How Young Children Learn

Kantrowitz and Wingert (1989) believe that children between the ages of 5 and 8 have to be taught differently from older children. During these years, children begin to learn how to mentally think about and solve problems in their

heads; however, they still are not capable of thinking and solving problems in the same way as older children. Young children also need to be active. Unlike older children, primary aged children become more tired during long periods of sitting than by jumping or running. Bredekamp (1987) indicates that primary aged children learn best through hands-on, active experiences and manipulation of real objects, rather than sitting and listening for long periods of time.

Young children develop at varying rates; therefore, they need programs which are set up to allow for these differences (Kantrowitz and Wingert, 1989). Bredekamp (1987) states that "programs should be tailored to meet the needs of children, rather than expecting children to adjust to the demands of a specific program" (p.1). Programs that adjust to meet the needs of children they serve are necessary to promote learning.

A philosophy known as developmentally appropriate practice is based on how young children learn. In its guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice, the National Association for the Education of Young Children states that a curriculum for young children is designed to be appropriate for the children's age with special attention given to the children's needs, interests, and developmental levels (Bredekamp, 1987). According to Bredekamp (1987), one of the most important aspects of children's development is that all areas - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive - are integrated. Development in one area is influenced by development in other areas. Children's learning, like their development, is integrated. Therefore, the curriculum for young children does not need to be divided by subject area. For example, children learn about math

concepts through musical activities; children demonstrate their knowledge of reading and writing when working on science projects (Bredekamp, 1987).

The experiences and knowledge young children bring to school, combined with their natural curiosity, are the keys to learning in the primary years (State of Nebraska Department of Education, 1993). As stated by the State of Nebraska Department of Education (1993), every child enters the world ready to learn, wanting to learn and, in fact, needing to learn. A child's need for food and shelter is matched by the importance of learning about his/her environment. Gullo (1992) describes the effective early childhood environment as "one in which the child's learning and development is sustained in many ways. It is an environment that provides choices for children within a structure designed to support the curriculum. It is an environment that provides for children's interactions with objects and with other children and adults. It is an environment that maintains children's interests, and provides experiences that are meaningful and interesting. Finally, it is an environment that is responsive to individual children's needs by providing flexibility in the curriculum" (p. 35).

The early grades pose special challenges because that is when children's attitudes toward school and learning are shaped (Elkind, 1987; Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1989). At this stage of development and learning, it is more important to focus on interests rather than specific skills they learn, because children who are motivated are bound to go on learning, particularly when they are out of the classroom and throughout the rest of their lives.

The Problems of Standardized Tests

The preceding description of how young children learn clearly illustrates the inappropriateness of standardized testing as a means of assessment for young children. The chief problems in today's use of standardized tests seem to be these: children are given standardized tests before they are ready; standardized tests are not valid measures of accountability; standardized tests do not reflect the child's development.

A report entitled Right From the Start which describes appropriate assessment practices states that children are being given standardized tests before they are ready. Young children do not do well on pencil and paper tests. The National Association of State Boards of Education (1988) agrees. They further state that preschool, kindergarten and primary teachers are using standardized tests, worksheets and workbooks, and other practices that focus on academic skills too early. Other national organizations such as the Association for Childhood Education International (Perrone, 1977), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (1988), and the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (1989) have made similar statements calling for an end to children taking paper and pencil tests before they are developmentally ready, and drilling children on isolated skills, which standardized testing encourages.

Another reason for opposing the use of standardized tests is that they are not valid measures of accountability and that they are producing classroom practices harmful to young children's development. The most commonly used

standardized tests focus on a narrow range of academic skills which do not accurately reflect what children know. Children know so much more than they are "taught," and what is tested may not be the important learning that the children have done. In most cases, standardized testing is unrelated to the ongoing activities of classrooms. Children's overall strengths and progress are not demonstrated. Standardized tests reveal children's wrong answers and what they cannot do or do not know, rather than what children can do.

A final reason involves one type of standardized test known as the norm-referenced test which indicates where an individual stands in an appropriate norm group; it does not specify where a child stands in a developmental progression (Bergan & Feld, 1993). The scores on these tests are often inappropriately used (for ability grouping or placement decisions). Kamii (1990) believes that the use of standardized tests for assessment purposes does children a real disservice. It is important for schools to rethink the whole process of assessment and evaluation of young children so that more appropriate and meaningful methods may be established.

Present Assessment Practices

In kindergarten and primary grade classrooms across this country, a variety of assessment practices are evident. In classrooms where developmentally appropriate practices are valued, teachers are looking for meaningful ways to assess children's development and learning. Information gained through observations form the basis for assessment. At the same time,

there are many classrooms, particularly at the primary level, where standardized testing is still used as the chief means for assessment.

Assessment practices are needed that consider the various aspects of child development and allow young children to initiate at least some of the activities in which they are to be assessed. One approach is the observation of children's typical activities in developmentally appropriate programs. Children's activities naturally include all dimensions of their development (Schweinhart, 1993).

Bredekamp (1987) believes that assessment of young children's growth and development is essential because this information is used in planning an appropriate program. She also agrees that the "assessment of young children should rely heavily on the results of observations of their development and descriptive data" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 12).

Now, more than at any time in the past, assessment is beginning to look more authentic; more and more assessment is based on children's performance in real-life situations. For example, it is common to see assessments of beginning literacy where teachers observe as children pick up books, turn the pages and "read" to a friend or a favorite stuffed animal (Valencia, 1990a). According to Hills (1993), "In real life children are most themselves when they are in familiar environments with adults and children whom they know and trust" (p.22). In these situations, children are most likely to demonstrate what they know. When children are in unfamiliar situations and performing unusual tasks,

their behaviors would not be true indications of their development and learning (Hills, 1993).

The assessment field must develop new practices, such as authentic assessment, that go along with the early childhood profession's process goals. Hills (1993) states "Early childhood educators are on good theoretical and policy grounds when they feel a sense of urgency about appropriate assessment of young children they guide and teach" (p.22). Hills (1993) also indicated that assessment processes must document the progress children make, their strengths, and the ways they learn.

Meisels (1993) agrees that it is time to adopt authentic assessment. He believes that this type of assessment provides a way to evaluate a child's learning and development that standardized tests do not capture. Authentic assessment allows teachers to learn about how children understand and interpret facts and ideas by documenting children's interactions with materials and other children in the classroom. Meisels (1993) claims authentic assessment puts assessment back where it belongs: in the hands of teachers and children, and in the environment that they occupy. One of the forms that authentic assessment may take is the portfolio.

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolios are systematic collections of similar pieces of children's work put together at regular intervals. These pieces can be compared to assess children's progress over time (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992). Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) indicate that portfolios can show the effort and growth a child

makes and meet the accountability demands that were once accomplished through testing. They also state "through reflection on systematic collections of student work, teachers and students can work together to illuminate students' strengths, needs, and progress" (Tierney, Carter, and Desai, 1991, p.41). Portfolios typically include samples of the children's writings, such as journal entries, stories, and reports, including some first drafts as well as finished products (Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991); samples of the child's representations in math; work samples in reading, such as audio tapes of oral reading and story telling; teachers' comments and assessments; and creative expressions, like original artwork or photographs of the child's block constructions.

Work samples only tell a portion of a student's growth, therefore, teachers also need to establish time to enter their observations of the student into the portfolio. However, the teacher should try to establish some criteria before they begin the observations. Grady (1992) states that observations are not as objective as standardized tests and that observations by themselves do not constitute assessment. It is important to relate what is observed to the goals and objectives of the program and for each child. Assessment through observation is an informal way of collecting information about children when they are engaged in typical classroom activities. Note-taking during these observations could take the form of running records or descriptions, written while the behavior is happening. Anecdotal records, logs, or journals written after a situation has occurred are also useful as are rating scales and checklists of certain behaviors (Hills, 1993).

Portfolios will differ from classroom to classroom and from student to student depending upon the needs of the classroom or student. It is important to be selective in what to include in a portfolio. The first step teachers can take for the implementation of portfolio assessment is working with students to help them save a wide variety of their work samples. Students then need to select samples that they feel represent themselves. This can be a powerful educational tool in and of itself. Students can decide with guidance from the teacher how many pieces should make up the portfolio. Because reviewing the selections is time consuming, the number of pieces that go in should be limited. Usually students include three to six pieces for each content area a year. Teacher and student conferences for reviewing these items with students will help students gain experience in comparing and contrasting their work. Students will become more familiar with explaining features of their own writings and discover new directions for inquiry. These conferences will also provide the teacher with an opportunity to identify and discuss each student's strengths.

Portfolio assessment is not an easy program to implement or one in which nothing can go wrong. Rushing into it with little planning or without allocating enough time or resources may guarantee disaster (Filmer, 1991). Vavrus (1990) maintains that a key element in using portfolios successfully is organization. Teachers need a clear and efficient system for deciding how and when documents go in and out of a portfolio during a school year. Student collections that have been assembled properly over a period of time will present an

unmistakably clear image of what students have accomplished. They will also show that students have engaged in self-reflection.

Teachers will find that some students need more guidance than others in developing their portfolios. This is part of the art of teaching, to be able to identify and give additional direction when necessary. Teachers also have to be able to develop the art of having students talk about their compositions. Teachers need to let them talk on their terms, not terms from an English grammar book.

Portfolios represent a philosophy that requires teachers to view assessment as an integral part of instruction. It is a philosophy that honors both the process and products of learning as well as the active participation of the teacher and the students in their own evaluation and growth (Valencia, 1990b).

The Benefits of a Portfolio

There are many benefits to using a portfolio. First, the emphasis of a portfolio is on what the child can do, rather than on what the child cannot do or how many mistakes have been has made. Because the focus of portfolios is on what the child can do, portfolios contain information that reflects all of the child's strengths. A collection of a child's work also reveals much about the personal characteristics of the child, such as the child's confidence, thinking patterns, and interests (Tierney, Carter, & Desai, 1991).

Portfolios can also be used to document a child's development and focus on growth. This includes growth in ability, attitudes, skills and expression (Hamm & Adams, 1991). They can become a window into the child's head, a

way for both teachers and children to understand the educational process at the developmental level of the individual learner.

Another benefit of portfolios, according to Vukelich (1992), is that when carefully put together, portfolios show the range of a child's work. They integrate instruction and assessment. Because the contents reflect classroom activities, and because portfolios are part of the assessment process, both children's activity and teacher's activity are brought together in portfolio collection. Through portfolios, teachers teach by studying how children learn. Instruction is then linked with assessment. While children work, the teacher can observe, listen, informally interview and collect samples of the work the children produce.

A final benefit is that portfolio assessment relies mostly on procedures that reflect the ongoing life of the classroom and normal experiences of the children. Portfolio assessment avoids approaches that place children in unfamiliar situations, interfere with the usual learning and developmental activities in the classroom, or divert children from their natural learning process (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992).

CHAPTER 3

Method

Introduction

This chapter will describe the methods and procedures used in this study to examine teacher familiarity and use of portfolios as well as their concerns about portfolio use.

Sample

A list of subjects was compiled through the 1994-1995 Nebraska Education Directory. A total of 153 teachers were included in this study. All schools involved were contacted to obtain permission to involve their teachers in the study. A list of schools may be found in Appendix A. The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects was contacted by letter to obtain permission to use human subjects in this study. A copy of this letter of approval may be found in Appendix E. The subjects in this study were kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers of public elementary schools in Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts within a 30-mile radius in Southeast Central Nebraska. All teachers fitting this criteria were included in the study.

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was the primary source of data in this study. The instrument was adapted from a survey written by Johns and VanLeirsburg in 1991. It was assumed that the teachers would make reliable and valid judgments regarding the use of portfolios. The survey had already been

constructed; therefore, it was easily adapted and used for this study. The questionnaire consisted of forty-four questions relating to familiarity and use of portfolios, contents of portfolios, and teacher concerns about portfolios. See Appendix C for Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) survey and Appendix D for adapted survey.

The data and findings from the questionnaire provided information concerning familiarity and use of portfolios, teacher concerns about portfolios, and demographic information. The data determined if relationships occur between familiarity and use of portfolios and their implementation, as well as concerns about portfolios and their implementation.

Procedure

By adapting a survey written by Johns and VanLeirsburg in 1991, identification of the problem could best be accomplished. Permission was obtained to use the survey from Peggy VanLeirsburg over the telephone on June 22, 1994. A copy of permission appears in Appendix B.

Permission was requested from the Plattsmouth School Administration and all other schools in November 1994 to conduct the survey. A copy of the cover letter may be found in Appendix F and copies of the letters of permission may be found in Appendix H. After permission was granted, the questionnaire was mailed to the elementary schools. The questionnaire, a cover letter and a stamped, self-addressed envelope were enclosed. A copy of the cover letter may be found in Appendix G. Approximately 153 questionnaires were mailed. Ninety-three surveys were returned for a 61% return rate.

Variables

Demographic variables included grade level taught, teaching experience, level of education, background in portfolio use through college courses, and background in portfolio use through in-service sessions. The variables of interest were portfolio use, extent of familiarity with portfolios, and level of concern about portfolios.

Definition of Demographic Variables

Because the number of teachers that fell into some levels of these variables was very small, all the variables were recoded to provide for more even distributions.

Teaching Experience was divided into the following categories: 1 or less years, 2-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and 16 or more years. The variable relating to teaching experience was recoded to a 3-point scale (1 or less years, 2-5 years, 6 or more years) from a 5-point scale.

Level of Education was divided into the following categories: bachelors, masters, masters plus, K-12 reading specialist, and doctorate. The variable relating to level of education was recoded to a 3-point scale (bachelors, masters, masters plus) from a 5-point scale.

Background in Portfolio Use Through College Courses was divided into the following categories: none, one, two, three, and more than three. The variable relating to background in portfolio use through college courses was recoded to a 3-point scale (none, one or two, three or more) from a 5-point scale.

Background in Portfolio Use Through In-service Sessions was divided into the following categories: none, one, two, three, and more than three. The variable relating to background in portfolio use through in-service sessions was recoded to a 3-point scale (none, one or two, three or more) from a 5-point scale.

Definition of Variables of Interest

Portfolio Use was recoded as 1 (yes) or 2 (no).

Extent of Familiarity was described in the following categories: "extremely," "quite a bit," "some," "very little," and "I'm not." The variable relating to extent of familiarity was recoded to a 3-point scale (high, medium, low) from a 5-point scale.

Level of Concern was described in the following categories: "a very serious concern," "a serious concern," "some concern," "very little concern," and "no concern." The variable level of concern was the sum of the responses on questionnaire items 24 (planning), 25 (organizing), and 26 (managing), with responses recoded so that responses were scored as 5 (very serious concern) down to 1 (no concern). Thus, the range for the level of concern variable was from 15 (high) to 3 (low).

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Release 4.0, was used to analyze responses to the surveys. The SPSS subroutines FREQUENCIES, CHI-SQUARE, and ONEWAY were used for data analysis.

The research questions found in Chapter 1 were analyzed as follows:

1. The relationship between teachers' extent of familiarity and teachers' portfolio use by utilizing a 3 x 2 chi-square test for independence.

2. The relationship between teachers' level of concern and teachers' portfolio use by utilizing a 3 x 2 chi-square test for independence.

3. The relationship between teachers' extent of familiarity and teachers' level of concern by utilizing a 3 x 3 chi-square test for independence.

4. The relationship between teachers' teaching experience and teachers' portfolio use by utilizing a 3 x 2 chi-square test for independence.

5. The relationship between teachers' level of education and teachers' portfolio use by utilizing a 3 x 2 chi-square test for independence.

6.a. The relationship between teachers' background in portfolio use through college courses and teachers' portfolio use by utilizing a 3 x 2 chi-square test for independence.

6.b. The relationship between teachers' background in portfolio use through in-service sessions and teachers' portfolio use by utilizing a 3 x 2 chi-square test for independence.

In addition, use/concern/familiarity were analyzed by grade level using one-way analyses of variance.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Introduction

This chapter examines the data from the mailed questionnaires. The resulting data is presented in six parts: the subjects, the familiarity and use of portfolios, the contents of portfolios, teacher concerns about portfolios, teacher comments, the analysis of the research questions, additional analyses, and the summary.

Of the 93 questionnaires which were returned, all were acceptable for inclusion in the study. Survey data were initially examined using the subroutine "Frequencies" from the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Subjects

Of the 153 teachers who were sent questionnaires, 61% responded. Of those teachers who responded, 20.7% were kindergarten teachers, 37% were first grade teachers, and 41.3% were second grade teachers.

In terms of teaching experience, 61.3% of the teachers who answered had 11 or more years of teaching experience while 20.4% of the teachers had 5 or fewer years of teaching experience. Overall, the respondents represent a very experienced group of teachers. In this study, 58.2% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, while 41.8% had earned a master's degree or master's degree plus additional hours. When asked how many college courses they had taken in which portfolios were a part of the content, 64.8% of the teachers responding had not taken a portfolio college course, 28.6% of the teachers had

taken one or two portfolio college courses, and 6.6% of the teachers reported they had taken 3 or more such courses. In regard to the number of in-service sessions about portfolios attended, 34.4% of the respondents indicated they had not attended any portfolio in-service sessions, 45.6% had attended one or two portfolio in-service sessions, and 20% reported taking 3 or more portfolio in-service sessions.

Familiarity and Use of Portfolios

Teachers were asked to rank their familiarity with portfolios on a five-point scale ranging from "extremely," through "quite a bit," "some," "very little," and "I'm not." Only 6.5% of the teachers who responded rated themselves as having "very little," or no knowledge of portfolios while 54.8% of the teachers rated themselves as "quite a bit," or "extremely" familiar with portfolios.

Seventy-two percent of the teachers who responded reported that they were involved in actually using portfolios and 28% reported that they were not involved in using portfolios. Of the teachers actually using portfolios, 75% of them indicated that they learned about portfolio use from other teachers or in-service sessions. As a group, more teachers (41.2%) reported they had learned from other teachers rather than from in-service sessions(33.8%).

Respondents were asked about length of time using portfolios. Of the teachers using portfolios, 64.6% had been using them for two years or less and 35.4% had been using portfolios for more than two years. Teachers were also asked to what extent they are implementing portfolios. Of the teachers who had been using portfolios, 42.4% reported using them "quite a lot" or "extensively"

while 57.6% reported using them "some" or "little." The decision to use portfolios was reported by 60.6% of the teachers to be theirs alone, while 39.4% reported that portfolio use was required by someone else (e.g., their school or a school district).

Most teachers using portfolios reported that the portfolios were teacher made. An overwhelming majority (93.8%) of the teachers were using teacher made portfolios rather than district made or commercial portfolios.

Of those using portfolios, 98.4% of the teachers responding reported that they felt the content areas best suited for the use of portfolios are Reading and Language Arts, with 98.4% of the teachers using portfolios for these areas. An additional question on portfolio use about where portfolios are used (classroom, school, district) was dropped from the data analysis because categories may not have been interpreted as being mutually exclusive. Because of this and because 30.1% of the respondents didn't answer, this question was eliminated.

Contents of Portfolios

Teachers were asked to rate a list of potential contents for inclusion in a portfolio. The scale used to rate whether each source would be included comprised the categories "definitely," "probably," "uncertain," "probably wouldn't," and "definitely wouldn't." As a group, more respondents identified six items from the list as more important than the others for inclusion. For each of these items, at least 80% of the teachers responded that they would "probably" or "definitely" include it. These items were writing and drawing samples related to content areas (97.8%), a thoughtful selection of student work on important

skills and strategies (92.5%), a checklist of relevant reading behaviors (83.9%), teacher observations and insights (82.8%), writing samples of different genres in which ideas are modified from first draft to final product (82.8%), and student self-evaluation (80.6%). To a lesser degree, respondents also reported including a listing of materials read (71%), collaboratively produced progress notes (69.9%), classroom tests (69.6%), and audiotapes (65.6%). The least chosen options for inclusion in a portfolio were photographs (54.8%) and standardized tests (38%). Because of a typographical error on the original survey sent to teachers, the term "information inventories" should have read "informal inventories". This resulted in teacher confusion about the term used in the question and so the item was dropped from the analysis.

Teacher Concerns About Portfolios

One area of the survey focused on teacher perceptions of possible practical problems associated with the use of portfolios. Teachers were asked to rate a list of possible practical problems on a five-point scale ranging from "a very serious concern" to "no concern." The teachers perceived the following issues as either "serious" or "very serious" concerns. These included managing the contents of portfolios (66.7%), preparing notes and completing checklists (65.6%), organizing portfolios (62.4%), planning portfolios (60.2%), and developing checklists for the portfolio (53.8%).

Other concerns identified by teachers were: using portfolios as the sole means of evaluating student progress (47.3%), talking with students about contents (40.4%), having portfolios replace standardized tests or achievement

tests (37.6%), all the other teachers in my school are using portfolios and I'm not (35.9%), and all my school system embracing the use of portfolios (30.1%).

The teachers identified the following issues as either of "little" or of "no" concern. These included costs associated with folders, boxes, files, tapes, etc. (64.1%), using portfolios as one means of evaluating student progress (53.8%), using portfolios in parent-teacher conferences (44.3%), deciding where to keep portfolios (44.1%), and providing access to students (40.8%).

Teacher Comments

The final question of the survey asked the respondents who had used portfolios to list the items included in their portfolios. The item mentioned most often by this group was writing samples. The second most often included item listed by portfolio users was drawing samples. The type of drawing sample frequently mentioned was a student self-portrait. Finally, the third most often included item by users of portfolios was student self-evaluations. All of these items were included in the survey, and at least 80% of all of the respondents chose them for inclusion.

The final portion of the survey allowed the teachers to write down any comments they would like to add. Seventeen respondents, or 18%, wrote some comments on their survey. Of the 17, the most frequent response was in regard to the concern over management, organization, and time involved in individual assessment. Six of the respondents wrote about the time factor. Five teachers reported using portfolios when communicating with parents. The teachers felt portfolios were a helpful tool for keeping parents informed about their child's

progress. Four respondents mentioned that portfolios were relatively new to them and that they felt they needed more information and training to use portfolios. Two subjects stated that through the use of portfolios they can accurately describe and show each child's progress and growth. They also mentioned that portfolios show more actual growth than standardized tests and report cards.

Analysis of the Research Questions

*Research question 1: Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' **extent of familiarity** with portfolios and **portfolio use**?* A 3(extremely, quite a bit, some) x 2(yes, no) chi-square test for independence was used to test whether teachers' extent of familiarity with portfolios and portfolio use were related. The chi-square test showed the variables to be related (chi-square = 38.77, df = 2, $p < .00005$). Therefore, Cramer's V was used to measure the strength of the relationship (V = .66). The degree of the relationship was at the moderate to high level.

*Research question 2: Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' **level of concern** about portfolios and **portfolio use**?* A 3(low, medium, high) x 2(yes, no) chi-square test for independence was used to test whether teachers' level of concern about portfolios and portfolio use were related. The chi-square test showed the variables to be unrelated (chi-square = 1.45, df = 2, n.s.).

*Research question 3: Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' **extent of familiarity** with portfolios and the*

*teachers' **level of concern** about portfolios?* A 3(extremely, quite a bit, some) x 3(low, medium, high) chi-square test for independence was used to test whether teachers' extent of familiarity with portfolios and teachers' level of concern about portfolios were related. The chi-square test showed the variables to be unrelated (chi-square = 2.30, df = 4, n.s.).

*Research question 4: Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' **teaching experience** and **portfolio use**?* A 3(1 year or less, 2 - 5 years, 6 or more years) x 2(yes, no) chi-square test for independence was used to test whether teachers' teaching experience and portfolio use were related. The chi-square test showed the variables to be unrelated (chi-square = 3.06, df = 2, n.s.).

*Research question 5: Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' **level of education** and **portfolio use**?* A 3(Bachelors, Masters, Masters plus) x 2(yes, no) chi-square test for independence was used to test whether teachers' level of education and portfolio use were related. The chi-square test showed the variables to be unrelated (chi-square = 2.38, df = 2, n.s.).

*Research question 6.a.: Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' **background in portfolio use through college courses** and **portfolio use**?* A 3(none, one or two, three or more) x 2(yes, no) chi-square test for independence was used to test whether teachers' background in portfolio use through college courses and portfolio use were related at the .05

level. The chi-square test showed the variables to be nearly related (chi-square = 4.94, df = 2, p = .08).

Research question 6.b.: Is there a relationship between kindergarten, first and second grade teachers' ***background in portfolio use through in-service sessions and portfolio use****?* A 3(none, one or two, three or more) x 2(yes, no) chi-square test for independence was used to test whether teachers' background in portfolio use through in-service sessions and portfolio use were related. The chi-square test showed the variables to be related (chi-square = 6.38, df = 2, $p < .05$). Therefore, Cramer's V was used to measure the strength of the relationship (V = .27). The degree of the relationship was at the low to moderate level.

Additional Analyses

In addition to the analyses of the specific research questions developed for this study, further analyses were done using grade level as an independent variable and portfolio use, extent of familiarity and level of concern as dependent variables in three separate one-way analyses of variance (one-way ANOVAs). When portfolio use was examined by teacher grade level, the one-way ANOVA was not significant ($F_{(2,88)} = .83$, p = .439). Likewise, the one-way ANOVA for level of concern by grade level was not significant ($F_{(2,88)} = .04$, p = .958), nor was the one-way ANOVA for extent of familiarity by grade level ($F_{(2,88)} = .12$, p = .888).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

Summary

The purpose of this final chapter is to review the procedures used in this study, to draw certain conclusions based on the findings given in Chapter 4, and to offer recommendations for further study.

The current study was based on data which could be used to present a valid picture of kindergarten, first and second grade teacher familiarity and use of portfolios as well as their concerns about portfolio use. This research could prove to be of some significance in recognizing if there is a need for teachers to be educated or assisted in the use of portfolios. The researcher's purpose was to gain answers through adapting a survey conducted by Johns & VanLeirsburg (1991). The adapted survey contained 44 questions and statements which focused on three major areas: familiarity and use of portfolios, contents of portfolios, and teacher concerns about portfolios. The questionnaire was sent to 153 kindergarten, first and second grade teachers in Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in Southeast Central Nebraska.

The surveys were mailed to each elementary school. Ninety-three kindergarten, first and second grade teachers responded to the survey. Although any implications of this study must be approached carefully due to the small sample of teachers, particularly when looking at the group of participants, there are some inferences which may be made. These inferences are interesting enough to justify further study with reference to the relationship

between teachers' familiarity and use of portfolios as well as their concerns about the use of portfolios.

In the sample of 93 kindergarten, first and second grade teachers, there is moderate familiarity with the concept of portfolios. More than half (54.8%) of the teachers felt they were "extremely" or "quite a bit" familiar with portfolios. Only 6.5% of the teachers rated themselves as having "very little" or no knowledge of portfolios.

The survey indicated that kindergarten, first and second grade teachers were using portfolios as an assessment device. Seventy-two percent of the teachers were actually using portfolios, while 28% were not involved in using portfolios. Most of the teachers (75%) using portfolios learned about portfolios from other teachers or in-service sessions. Of the group using portfolios, 64.6% have been using them for two years or less. Over half of the portfolio users (57.6%) reported using them "some" or "little." Most of the teachers (60.9%) who use portfolios said it was a teacher decision to use them. Of the teachers using portfolios, 93.8% used teacher made portfolios rather than district or commercial made portfolios. An overwhelming 98.4% of the teachers using portfolios felt the content areas best suited for portfolios are Reading and Language Arts, with 98.4% using portfolios for these areas.

The teachers who responded gave low approval to including standardized tests in the portfolios. However, they did approve of using writing and drawing samples, a selection of student work on important skills and strategies, a checklist on relevant reading behaviors, teacher observations and insights,

writing samples of different genres in which ideas are modified from first draft to final product, and student self-evaluation.

Possible practical problems were revealed. The largest concerns by the teachers are managing the contents of portfolios, preparing notes, completing checklists, organizing portfolios, planning portfolios, and developing checklists for the portfolio.

The analysis of data revealed two statistically significant relationships between the variables studied. Research question 1, which addressed the relationship between teachers' extent of familiarity with portfolios and portfolio use, was confirmed. Research question 6.b., the relationship between teachers' in-service preparations for portfolio use and actual use, was also confirmed. Research questions 2, 4, 5, and 6.a. were not confirmed, as no significant relationships were found between teachers' level of concern, teaching experience, educational level, or college course preparation for portfolio use, and actual use. There was also no significant relationship found between teachers' extent of familiarity with portfolios and concern about using them.

Conclusions

From the analysis of data collected in the survey, the researcher concludes that there is a relationship between familiarity with portfolios and portfolio use. Specifically, teachers who are more familiar with portfolios were more likely to use them as an assessment tool.

In general, the teachers who responded to the survey were somewhat familiar with the use of portfolios. Moreover, the study showed a moderately high percentage of respondents were actually using them.

The researcher also concludes that there is a relationship between background in portfolio use through in-service sessions and actual portfolio use. Specifically, teachers with training through in-service sessions about portfolios were more likely to implement them in their classrooms. To generalize, most the teachers actually using portfolios learned about them from other teachers or in-service sessions.

Further Study and Recommendations

This study was limited to kindergarten, first and second grade teachers. Other studies should involve teachers from preschool programs and teachers from intermediate and upper elementary grades. Teachers from various grade levels would offer more diverse knowledge of portfolios.

Further, a small sample of teachers from rural and semi-rural districts were included in this study. A similar investigation with teachers in metropolitan areas should be conducted to determine if differences in teacher familiarity and use of portfolios as well as concerns about portfolios exist.

Finally, the survey was conducted by an independent researcher. A similar survey conducted by the school district could enhance survey response.

Based upon the findings of this study, this researcher recommends that Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts within a 30-mile radius in Southeast Central Nebraska consider offering training or in-

service sessions to teachers to increase their familiarity with portfolios. Long-term practical and useful techniques about portfolios are needed so portfolios can be a continual means of assessment rather than a fad that vanishes from the assessment process.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

School	No. of Teachers
Arlington Elementary School	5
Ashland/Greenwood Elementary School	8
Bennington Elementary School	5
Blair Elementary Schools - North, South, West	15
Conestoga Elementary School at Murray	5
Elementary School at Eagle	6
Elkhorn Elementary Schools - Hillrise, Skyline, Westridge	17
Elementary School at Elmwood/Elementary School at Murdock	5
Fort Calhoun Elementary School	4
Gretna Elementary School	9
LaPlatte Elementary School	3
Louisville Elementary School	5
Manley Public School	1
Nebraska City Elementary Schools - Hayward, Northside	16
Plattsmouth Elementary - Central, Columbian, First Ward	11
Springfield Elementary School	5
Elementary School at Syracuse	5
Valley Elementary School	7
Waterloo Elementary School	3
Evelyn Hamlow Elementary at Waverly	9
Weeping Water Elementary School	4
Westmont Elementary School	5
Total	153

APPENDIX B

On Wednesday, June 22, 1994, permission was granted (by phone) from Peggy VanLeirsburg to use the Johns and VanLeirsburg (1991) survey. Permission was also granted to adapt questions.

Survey # 2

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT: WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Recent articles in professional journals have suggested a "portfolio approach" to classroom literacy assessment.

1. To what extent are you familiar with the "portfolio" concept?

   a. extremely
   b. quite a bit
   c. some
   d. very little
   e. I'm not

2. Are you involved in actually using portfolios?

   a. yes
   b. no

If yes, go to item 3; if no go to item 6.

3. The decision to use portfolios was

   a. yours alone
   b. required by someone
   c. required by your school or district

4. Portfolios are used in your

   a. classroom
   b. school
   c. school district
   d. all of the above

5. The portfolios you use are

   a. teacher made
   b. commercial
   c. a combination of teacher made and commercial

Portfolios may contain data from many sources. Use this scale to rate each source that you would consider including in a literacy portfolio.

   a. definitely
   b. probably
   c. uncertain
   d. probably wouldn't
   e. definitely wouldn't

6. Audio tapes.
7. Photographs of reading activities.
8. A listing of materials read (e.g., books, magazines

9. Writing samples related to literacy experiences (e.g., pages from reading logs).
10. A checklist of relevant reading behaviors.
11. Student self-evaluations.
12. A thoughtful selection of student work on important reading skills or strategies (e.g., story map, comprehension).
13. Teacher observations and insights (e.g., attitudes toward reading, growth in discussion about stories and books, use of various word identification strategies).
14. Collaboratively (student and teacher) produced progress notes.
15. Classroom tests.
16. Standardized tests.
17. Informal reading inventories.
18. Writing samples of different genres in which ideas are modified from first draft to final product.

Several statements to promote the concept of portfolios have been given. Darken the letter on your answer sheet which indicates whether you a) strongly agree, b) agree, c) uncertain, d) disagree, or e) strongly disagree.

19. Authenticity should anchor reading assessment.
20. Assessment should be a continuous, on-going process.
21. Multidimensional types of assessment should be used to reflect the complexity of the reading process.
22. Assessment must provide for active, collaborative reflection by both teacher and student.

Here are some practical problems that may confront users of portfolios. Darken the letter on your answer sheet indicating if you perceive the potential problem to be:

a. a very serious concern
b. a serious concern
c. some concern
d. very little concern
e. no concern

23. Planning portfolios.
24. Organizing portfolios.
25. Managing the contents of portfolios.
26. Developing checklists for the portfolio.
27. Where to keep portfolios.
28. Providing access to students.
29. Talking with students about contents.
30. Preparing notes; completing checklists.
31. All teachers in my school using a portfolio.
32. All my school system embracing the use of portfolios.
33. Using portfolios in parent-teacher conferences.
34. Using portfolios as the sole means of evaluating student progress.
35. Using portfolios as one means of evaluating student progress.

36. Having portfolios replace standardized reading tests or achievement tests.
37. Costs associated with folders, boxes, files, tapes, etc.

Some information about you.

38. Primary professional responsibility:

    a. primary teacher (1-3)
    b. intermediate teacher (4-6)
    c. secondary teacher (7-12)
    d. reading teacher (Chapter 1, special reading, etc.)
    e. other (specify on answer sheet by name)

39. Years of teaching experience:

    a. 1 or less
    b. 2-5
    c. 6-10
    d. 11-15
    e. 16 or more

40. Highest degree

    a. bachelors
    b. masters
    c. masters plus additional hours
    d. K-12 reading specialist
    e. doctorate

41. Hours in reading:

    a. 3 or less
    b. 4-12
    c. 13-21
    d. 22-30
    e. more than 30

42. If you answered yes to question 2, please list the items included in your portfolios on the back of the machine-scorable answer sheet. Thank you!

APPENDIX D

PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Please record your responses to the questionnaire on the answer sheet provided.

PART A Recent articles in professional journals have suggested a "portfolio approach" to classroom assessment.

1. To what extent are you familiar with the "portfolio" concept?
   a. extremely
   b. quite a bit
   c. some
   d. very little
   e. I'm not

2. Are you involved in actually using portfolios?
   a. yes
   b. no

   If yes, go to item 3; if no, go to item 11.

3. Where did you learn about portfolio use?
   a. from other teachers
   b. from inservice
   c. from college courses
   d. from personal reading in journals and books

4. How long have you been using portfolios?
   a. less than one year
   b. one year
   c. two years
   d. more than two years

5. To what extent are you implementing portfolios?
   a. extensively
   b. quite a lot
   c. some
   d. very little
   e. I'm not

6. The decision to use portfolios was
   a. yours alone
   b. required by someone
   c. required by your school or district

7. Portfolios are used in your
   a. classroom
   b. school
   c. school district
   d. all of the above

8. The portfolios you use are
   a. teacher made
   b. made by the district
   c. commercial

9. Which content areas are best suited for the use of portfolios?
   a. Reading/Language Arts
   b. Math
   c. Science
   d. Social Studies
   e. Art

10. Which content areas do you use portfolios for?
    a. Reading/Language Arts
    b. Math
    c. Science
    d. Social Studies
    e. Art

PART B Portfolios may contain data from many sources. Use this scale to rate each source that you would consider including in a portfolio.
   a. definitely
   b. probably
   c. uncertain
   d. probably wouldn't
   e. definitely wouldn't

11. Audio tapes.
12. Photographs of activities.
13. A listing of materials read (e.g., books, magazines).
14. Writing and drawing samples related to content areas (e.g., pages from reading logs and journals).
15. A checklist of relevant reading behaviors.
16. Student self-evaluations.
17. A thoughtful selection of student work on important skills or strategies (e.g., story map, comprehension).
18. Teacher observations and insights (e.g., attitudes toward content areas, growth in discussion about stories and books).
19. Collaboratively (student and teacher) produced progress notes.

20. Classroom tests.
21. Standardized tests.
22. Information inventories.
23. Writing samples of different genres in which ideas are modified from first draft to final product.

PART C Here are some practical problems that may confront users of portfolios. Indicate if you perceive the potential problem to be:

a. a very serious concern
b. a serious concern
c. some concern
d. very little concern
e. no concern

24. Planning portfolios.
25. Organizing portfolios.
26. Managing the contents of portfolios.
27. Developing checklists for the portfolio.
28. Deciding where to keep portfolios.
29. Providing access to students.
30. Talking with students about contents.
31. Preparing notes; completing checklists.
32. All teachers in my school using a portfolio.
33. All my school system embracing the use of portfolios.
34. Using portfolios in parent-teacher conferences.
35. Using portfolios as the sole means of evaluating student progress.
36. Using portfolios as one means of evaluating student progress.
37. Having portfolios replace standardized reading tests or achievement tests.
38. Costs associated with folders, boxes, files, tapes, etc.

General Information.

39. Primary professional responsibility:
    a. Kindergarten teacher
    b. First grade teacher
    c. Second grade teacher

40. Years of teaching experience:
    a. 1 or less
    b. 2-5
    c. 6-10
    d. 11-15
    e. 16 or more

41. Highest degree:
    a. bachelors
    b. masters
    c. masters plus additional hours
    d. K-12 reading specialist
    e. doctorate

42. Portfolio college courses taken:
    a. none
    b. one
    c. two
    d. three
    e. more than three

43. Portfolio in-services attended:
    a. none
    b. one
    c. two
    d. three
    e. more than three

44. If you answered yes to question 2, please list the items included in your portfolios on the back of the machine-scorable answer sheet.

Comments:

Thank You

APPENDIX E

University of Nebraska
Institutional Review Board
For the Protection of
Human Subjects

University of Nebraska Medical Center
Eppley Science Hall 3018
600 South 42nd Street
Box 986810
Omaha, NE 68198-6810
(402) 559-6463
Fax (402) 559-7845

January 27, 1995

Jayne Nick
3903 - 370 Plaza #15
Omaha, NE 68123

IRB # 059-95-EX

TITLE OF PROTOCOL: The Attitudes of Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade Teachers Toward the Implementation of Portfolios

Dear Ms. Nick:

The IRB has reviewed your Exemption Form for the above-titled research project. According to the information provided, this project is exempt under 45 CFR 46:101b, category 2. You are therefore authorized to begin the research.

It is understood this project will be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines. It is also understood that the IRB will be immediately notified of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project.

Sincerely,

E D Prentice

Ernest D. Prentice, PhD
Vice Chairman, IRB

EDP:jlg

University of Nebraska
Institutional Review Board
For the Protection of
Human Subjects

University of Nebraska Medical Center
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Fax (402) 559-7845

EXEMPTION FORM

SECTION I: APPLICATION DATA

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL: The Attitudes of Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade Teachers Toward the Implementation of Portfolios

STARTING DATE: November 1994

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jayne E. Nick

SECONDARY INVESTIGATOR(S): M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D., Thesis Advisor

DEPARTMENT/COLLEGE: Teacher Education

ADDRESS: 3903 370 Plaza #15, Omaha, NE ZIP CODE: 68123

TELEPHONE: (402)291-3621

SECTION 2: CERTIFICATION

CERTIFICATION OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Signature certifies that the research project as described will be conducted in full compliance with University of Nebraska Regulations governing human subject research as stated in the IRB Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is understood that the IRB will be notified of any proposed changes which may affect the exempt status of the research.

Signature of Principal Investigator — Date

Teacher - Plattsmouth Community Schools
Position

ADVISOR APPROVAL: Student investigators are required to obtain approval from their advisor. Signature of approval certifies the research proposal has been approved and recommended for submission to the IRB.

Signature of Advisor — Date

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Printed Name of Advisor

The IRB requires submission of an original and one (1) copy of the Exemption Form.

SECTION 3: REVIEW INFORMATION

In order to determine whether your proposal qualifies for exempt status under 45 CFR 46:101(b), the IRB requests submission of the following information. Each subpart must be titled as described below and addressed in the listed sequence.

I. **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.** State concisely and realistically what the research in this proposal is intended to accomplish.

II. **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECT POPULATION.** Address the following questions in sequence using the listed subheadings.
   a. **AGE RANGE.** What is the age range of the subjects?
   b. **SEX.** What is the sex of the subjects?
   c. **NUMBER.** What is the anticipated number of subjects?
   d. **SELECTION CRITERIA.** What are the subject selection criteria?

III. **METHOD OF SUBJECT SELECTION.** Describe the method(s) to be employed in the identification/recruitment of prospective subjects.

IV. **STUDY SITE.** State the location(s) where the study will be conducted. Attach letters of approval from any non-University of Nebraska study site.

V. **DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES.** Describe all procedures to be applied to subjects. Attach one copy of all surveys, questionnaires, and educational tests.

VI. **CONFIDENTIALITY.** Describe how and the extent to which confidentiality of data will be maintained.

VII. **INFORMED CONSENT.** Some technically exempt research projects ethically require informed consent (written or oral). If, in the investigator's opinion, the study requires informed consent, the method used to obtain informed consent should be described and any written consent forms submitted. If the study does not require consent, it should be so stated and justified.

VIII. **JUSTIFICATION OF EXEMPTION.** The exempt category (1-6) under which the proposal is submitted should be stated and justified.

SECTION 4: CATEGORIES OF RESEARCH THAT QUALIFY FOR EXEMPT STATUS

Research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the categories specified by Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46:101(b) are exempt from the requirements of 45 CFR 46. Only an Exemption Form must be submitted and approved by the IRB. The exempt categories do not, however, apply to research involving deception of subjects (the researcher deceives the subject with regard to the purpose of the research and/or the results of the subject's actions in the study), sensitive behavioral research, or to research involving pregnant women, prisoners, mentally incompetent people and other subject populations determined to be vulnerable.

Exempt Categories:

1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: (i) research on regular or special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

   Educational research protocols are exempt providing all of the following conditions are met:

   a. All of the research is conducted in a commonly accepted educational setting (e.g., public school).

   b. The research involves normal educational practices (e.g., comparison of instructional techniques).

   c. The study procedures do not represent a significant deviation in time or effort requirements from those educational practices already existent at the study site.

   d. The study procedures involve no increase in the level of risk or discomfort attendant normal, routine educational practices.

   e. The study procedures do not involve sensitive subjects (e.g., sex education).

   f. Provisions are made to ensure the existence of a non-coercive environment for those students who choose not to participate.

   g. The school or other institution grants written approval for the research to be conducted.

   NOTE: When an educational research project meets all of the above-listed conditions the IRB does not require parental consent. The investigator and/or the school system may, however, decide that parental consent should be obtained. Verbal child assent should be obtained. Educational projects that do not meet the above-listed conditions are not exempt and must be reviewed by either the expedited or full Board method.

2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

NOTE: Sensitive survey research is not exempt. A sensitive survey is one that deals with sensitive or highly personal aspects of the subject's behavior, life experiences or attitudes. Examples include chemical substance abuse, sexual activity or attitudes, sexual abuse, criminal behavior, sensitive demographic data, detailed health history, etc. The principal determination of sensitivity is whether or not the survey research presents a potential risk to the subject in terms of possible precipitation of a negative emotional reaction. An additional risk consideration is, of course, whether or not there is risk associated with a breach of confidentiality should one occur. With respect to potential psychological risk associated with a survey, the presence or absence of subject identifiers is not necessarily a consideration since the risk may be primarily associated with the sensitive nature of the survey as opposed to being dependent upon confidentiality. Subject identifiers do, however, become a factor when confidentiality is an issue.

NOTE: When children are involved as subjects in research using survey or interview procedures, the research is not exempt.

NOTE: When children are involved as subjects in research using observation techniques, the research is not exempt if the investigator participates in the activities being observed.

NOTE: Observation research involving sensitive aspects of a subject's behavior is not exempt.

3. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph 2 of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

4. Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

5. Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies: (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Attitudes of Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade Teachers Toward the Implementation of Reading Portfolios.

Jayne E. Nick

I. PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study will examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios for assessment purposes.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECT POPULATION

a. Age range: approximately 21 to 65
b. Sex: Male and female
c. Number: Approximately 150
d. Selection criteria: The subject population will include all kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers of public elementary schools in Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

III. METHOD OF SUBJECT SELECTION

All kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers of public elementary school in Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska will be asked to respond to a mail questionnaire.

IV. STUDY SITE

The study will be conducted in Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska. Letters of approval from the schools included in the study are attached.

V. DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

Subjects will be asked to complete a mail questionnaire which is enclosed. The questionnaire is to be mailed back to the researcher for analysis. Follow-up will be conducted as necessary to obtain an adequate response rate.

VI. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be anonymous and results will be reported without identifying individual teachers.

VII. INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent will not be required in this case. By returning the questionnaires, the teachers will be indicating their willingness to participate in the research.

VIII. JUSTIFICATION OF EXEMPTION

This study is exempt under Category 2 of the IRB guidelines. The research involves the use of a questionnaire to collect needed data. All questionnaires will be completed by subjects anonymously. Information being gathered is not sensitive and subjects' responses will not be used outside of the research study.

APPENDIX F

Jayne E. Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123
November 21, 1994

«First Name» «Last Name», «Title 2»
«Company»
«Street»
«City/St/Zp»

Dear «Title» «Last Name»:

I am writing to acquire permission to mail a questionnaire to kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers in your school district. The intent of the study is to examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered will not only assist me in writing my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be done anonymously, and the results will be reported without identifying individual teachers. A questionnaire is enclosed.

A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

APPENDIX G

Columbian Elementary School - Plattsmouth
February 5, 1995

Dear Primary Teacher:

I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha working on my Master's thesis. I am asking for your participation in a study that will examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. It has been designed to take no more than 15 minutes to complete, and a self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return the computer sheet and the comments sheet only.

Your voluntary participation in this study will not only assist me in writing my thesis, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and participation. YOUR INPUT IS CONFIDENTIAL.

Sincerely,

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher - Plattsmouth

P.S. PLEASE RETURN ONLY THE COMPUTER SHEET AND THE COMMENTS SHEET. PLEASE RETURN BY MARCH 1, 1995.

APPENDIX H

Plattsmouth Community Schools
1724 8th Ave.
Plattsmouth, Nebraska 68048
402-296-3361

Plattsmouth High School
1724 8th Avenue
Plattsmouth, NE 68048
296-3323

Plattsmouth Middle School
8th and Main
Plattsmouth, NE 68048
296-3174

Central School
10th and Main
Plattsmouth, NE 68048
296-4173

Columbian School
6th Avenue
Plattsmouth, NE 68048
296-4270

First Ward School
502 Avenue D
Plattsmouth, NE 68048
296-3193

Wintersteen/Headstart
South 1st Street
Plattsmouth, NE 68048
296-5250

January 11, 1994

Jayne Nick
Columbian Elementary
Plattsmouth, NE 68048

Dear Ms. Nick,

Our staff at the Plattsmouth Elementary Schools look forward to participating in your survey on portfolio assessment. If there is anything I can do to help in your research , please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Tom Peterson
Elementary Principal

An Equal Opportunity Employer

ELMWOOD-MURDOCK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Elementary/Middle School
400 West "F" Street
P.O. Box 100
Elmwood, NE 68349
(402) 994-2125
FAX: (402) 994-2078

Bruce A. Friedrich
Elementary/Middle School Principal

James R. Putman
Superintendent

Elementary/High School
300 Wyoming Street
P.O. Box 407
Murdock, NE 68407
(402) 867-2341
FAX: (402) 867-2009

Daniel L. Novak
High School Principal/Athletic Director

I give Joyce Tuck permission
to mail questionnaires to first, second,
and kindergarten teachers in the Elmwood
Murdock School District.

Bruce Friedrich

Elementary / Middle School Principal

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Teacher Education Department
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0163
(402) 554-3666

Jayne E. Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123
November 21, 1994

Jayne,
Well done - We'd be glad to help and would appreciate result sharing! - Nila
Sherri Sowers - Kdg
Janice Coe - 1st
Carol Williams - 1st
Kelly Kubie - 2nd
Kathy Valasek - 2nd

Nila Nielsen, Principal
Bennington Public Schools
156 & Old Bennington, Box 265
Bennington, NE 68007

Dear Ms. Nielsen:

I am writing to acquire permission to mail a questionnaire to kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers in your school district. The intent of the study is to examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered will not only assist me in writing my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be done anonymously, and the results will be reported without identifying individual teachers. A questionnaire is enclosed.

A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jayne E Nick

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher

M. Kaye Parnell

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Teacher Education Department
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0163
(402) 554-3666

Jayne E. Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123
November 21, 1994

You have my permission to mail questionnaires to K-2nd grade teachers at Conestoga Elementary.
Kay Shields

Kay Shields, Principal
Conestoga Elementary School-Murray
Box 187
Nehawka, NE 68413

Dear Ms. Shields:

I am writing to acquire permission to mail a questionnaire to kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers in your school district. The intent of the study is to examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered will not only assist me in writing my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be done anonymously, and the results will be reported without identifying individual teachers. A questionnaire is enclosed.

A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jayne E Nick

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher

M. Kaye Parnell

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Teacher Education Department
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0163
(402) 554-3666

Jayne E. Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123
November 21, 1994

Mac McKown, Principal
Arlington Public Schools
705 North 9th, Box 580
Arlington, NE 68002

OK Good luck, Mac
M McKown

Dear Mr. McKown:

I am writing to acquire permission to mail a questionnaire to kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers in your school district. The intent of the study is to examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered will not only assist me in writing my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be done anonymously, and the results will be reported without identifying individual teachers. A questionnaire is enclosed.

A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jayne E Nick

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher

M. Kaye Parnell

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

(X) NO PROBLEM WITH QUESTIONNAIRE.

TCHR'S NAMES:

Kdgt. - JANET WARNER
Gr. 1 - MARY SAGRAU
MARLENE MULLINS
Gr. 2 - JANET LUDWIG
SARAH BUSEKIST

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Teacher Education Department
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0163
(402) 554-3666

12-14-94

Dear Jayne,
You have my permission to proceed! It sounds like an interesting study! Thanks,
Anita Belsky

Jayne E. Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123
November 21, 1994

Anita Belsky, Principal
Westmont Elementary School
Richland Drive & ~~Glen~~ Glenn Street
~~Papillion~~ Omaha, NE 68138
or 13210 Glenn St.

Dear Ms. Belsky:

I am writing to acquire permission to mail a questionnaire to kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers in your school district. The intent of the study is to examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered will not only assist me in writing my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be done anonymously, and the results will be reported without identifying individual teachers. A questionnaire is enclosed.

A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jayne E. Nick

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher

M. Kaye Parnell

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Teacher Education Department
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0163
(402) 554-3666

Jayne E. Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123
November 21, 1994

Keith Rohwer, Superintendent
Nebraska City Public Schools
215 North 12th Street
Nebraska City, NE 68410

Dear Mr. Rohwer:

I am writing to acquire permission to mail a questionnaire to kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers in your school district. The intent of the study is to examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered will not only assist me in writing my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be done anonymously, and the results will be reported without identifying individual teachers. A questionnaire is enclosed.

A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jayne E. Nick

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher

M. Kaye Parnell

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

Jayne,

We would welcome the opportunity to participate. Good luck - could we have a copy of your findings?

Keith

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Teacher Education Department
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0163
(402) 554-3666

Jayne E. Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123
November 21, 1994

Gil Kettelhut, Superintendent
Valley Public Schools
401 South Pine
Valley, NE 68064

Dear Mr. Kettelhut:

I am writing to acquire permission to mail a questionnaire to kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers in your school district. The intent of the study is to examine the attitudes of kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers toward the implementation of portfolios. Teacher participation in this study is voluntary. Data gathered will not only assist me in writing my thesis as a graduate student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, but the results will be an asset for Plattsmouth and surrounding rural and semi-rural school districts in southeast central Nebraska.

The questionnaire has been designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. All information will remain confidential. The questionnaire will be done anonymously, and the results will be reported without identifying individual teachers. A questionnaire is enclosed.

A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for you to return your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Jayne E. Nick

Jayne E. Nick
Kindergarten Teacher

M. Kaye Parnell

M. Kaye Parnell, Ph.D.
Professor of Teacher Education

Dear Jayne & Kaye
I would have no problem with teachers participating. At Valley Elementary we are moving to the use of portfolio assessment & reporting beginning in the area of LA. Any results we can share will be ready & [illegible] to our work. If you need additional info or assistance please feel free to contact me directly.
George Daum, Ed.
Valley Elementary
Phone - 402 [illegible] 2994
E-mail [illegible]

ELKHORN
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

502 Glenn Street, Elkhorn, NE 68022-0439

December 15, 1994

Jayne Nick
3903 370 Plaza, #15
Omaha, NE 68123

Dear Jayne:

I have read your questionnaire and am hereby approving your request to survey Elkhorn kindergarten, first grade and second grade teachers.

Best of luck with your study.

Sincerely,

Roger D. Breed
Superintendent

c: Elementary Principals

Board of Education (402) 289-2579
FAX (402) 289-2585

Hillrise Elementary (402) 289-2602
Skyline Elementary (402) 289-3433
Westridge Elementary (402) 289-2559

Elkhorn Senior High (402) 289-4239
Elkhorn Middle School (402) 289-2428

Permission to mail the questionnaire was given during follow up phone calls by the following administrators:

January 6, 1995

Michael T. Hemen
Fort Calhoun Elementary

Frank M. Hoefling
Elementary School at Eagle

January 10, 1995

Adrienne L. Lehl
Blair Elementary Schools

Teresa Bray
Ashland-Greenwood Elementary

James R. Putnam
Elementary School at Murdock

Wesley S. Reed
Springfield Elementary School

Michael S. Lynch
Waterloo Elementary School

Tommy Hill
Evelyn Hamlow Elementary - Waverly

Dale R. Crosby
Weeping Water Elementary School and Manley Public School

January 12, 1995

Roxanne Voorhees
Elementary School at Syracuse

January 13, 1995

Patti Brownlee
Gretna Elementary School

APPENDIX I

Frequencies for Demographic Variables

Variable	(n)	(%)
Grade Level		
Kindergarten	19	20.7
First Grade	34	37.0
Second Grade	38	41.3
Years of Teaching Experience		
One Year Less	5	5.4
Two to Five Years	14	15.0
Six or More Years	74	79.6
Degree Level		
Bachelors	53	58.2
Masters	11	12.1
Masters Plus	27	29.7
Background Through College Courses		
None	59	64.8
One or Two	26	28.6
Three or More	6	6.6
Background Through In-service		
None	31	34.4
One or Two	41	45.6
Three or More	18	20.0