

Streamlining Classroom Portfolio Evidence

Classroom Portfolios are developed during Self-Assessment to demonstrate how each class within a program meets applicable accreditation criteria. Many programs have approached Classroom Portfolios by creating a separate portfolio for each class they serve, with each class documenting each individual criterion/indicator with one or more separate pieces of evidence. Feedback from programs indicates that this approach can be time consuming and results in a large amount of documentation. As a part of efforts to streamline the accreditation process for programs, NAEYC would like to highlight strategies that can help programs reduce the amount of time and documentation associated with Classroom Portfolios.

- **Encourage collaboration among groups.** When more than one class meets a criterion the same way, these groups can use the same piece of evidence to collectively demonstrate how the criterion is met by all classes. Remember that as long as the evidence authentically represents how the criterion is met, it can apply to a class even if the evidence wasn't collected in that particular class.

Consider the following example for Criterion 1.A.05, which states, “*Teachers share information with families about classroom rules, expectations, and routines not only at enrollment but also as needed throughout the year.*” If multiple classes within a program send regular newsletters to families to communicate information about classroom rules, expectations, and routines, a single sample newsletter could be presented on behalf of all classes that use this strategy to meet Criterion 1.A.05.

- **Compile Classroom Portfolio evidence for common spaces in the program.** Evidence of how criteria are met within common spaces can apply to all classes that use the space. For example, the program's playground may include materials designed to implement the program's curriculum, such as measuring cups and balance scales in the sand box; dramatic play materials in a playhouse; bug boxes and magnifying glasses to catch and observe insects; and materials to write about exciting things that happened on the playground. Classroom Portfolio evidence that documents how these materials are used to meet criteria can be presented for all classes that utilize the outdoor space.
- **Focus on quality over quantity.** Programs should focus on presenting well-developed Classroom Portfolio evidence that addresses the full language of each criterion, including all applicable indicators. Remember that the quality of the evidence is what counts, not the number of pieces of evidence that are presented. A class that uses five pieces of evidence to document the same high quality practice receives the same amount of credit as a class that documents that same high quality practice using one or two well-developed pieces of evidence
- **Make your evidence count.** A single piece of evidence can demonstrate how more than one indicator and/or criterion is met. Consider the following example:.

Evidence Presented: A picture of a teacher engaging a child in conversation at a pumpkin patch. The picture includes a caption that states, “Our preschool class took a field trip to the pumpkin patch. This teacher is having a conversation with the child about the different sizes of pumpkins. Vocabulary including ‘big’ and ‘small’ was used.”

Criteria Addressed by Evidence:

2.D.04, indicators a and c

Children have varied opportunities to develop vocabulary through

- a. conversations
- c. field trips

2.F.03

Children are provided varied opportunities and materials to categorize by one or two attributes such as shape, size, and color.

Because the high quality practice presented in the evidence demonstrates how portions of the noted criteria are met, you can use this single piece of evidence instead of identifying three separate pieces of evidence. Remember that 'varied' means at least two examples, so these criteria are not completely documented yet, but this one piece of evidence gets the program off to a very efficient start.

- **Focus on organization, not presentation.** Programs should focus on a well-organized portfolio rather than spending unnecessary time and money creating "scrapbook quality" portfolios. Notes can be hand-written and photographs can be low resolution, black and white prints or even photocopies. All evidence must be clear and legible; beyond that, presentation is not considered and will not affect how the NAEYC Assessor rates criteria.

Well-organized portfolios help the NAEYC Assessor to locate applicable evidence and rate criteria more efficiently. Remember that there is a 30 minute time limit for each Classroom Portfolio that is reviewed. Follow the tips below to ensure that an NAEYC Assessor will be able to conduct an efficient review of your Classroom Portfolio.

- *Label* – Write all applicable criteria numbers (i.e. 3.B.13.c, 2.C.01.b) on each piece of evidence.
- *Highlight* – Direct the Assessor's attention to the most relevant portion of a piece of evidence by highlighting key words or phrases.
- *Describe* – If evidence does not "speak for itself," include a short caption telling the NAEYC Assessor what the photograph or piece of evidence represents.

Once you have streamlined your Classroom Portfolio evidence using the strategies above, you must organize it in preparation for the site visit. On the day of the site visit, a program must present the NAEYC Assessor with a collection of Classroom Portfolio evidence that applies to each randomly selected class. Therefore, it is important to organize Classroom Portfolio evidence so that the NAEYC Assessor is able to locate evidence that authentically represents each individual class and review each class's evidence within 30 minutes. Some programs prefer to develop a separate binder or file box for each class and duplicate evidence that applies to multiple classes. Other programs present the NAEYC Assessor with a road map that helps them identify a class's Classroom Portfolio evidence among multiple binders or file boxes. Electronic portfolios are also accepted and can be used to effectively connect Classroom Portfolio evidence to individual classes.

This streamlined approach to Classroom Portfolio documentation encourages teaching teams to reflect on how they can improve their daily practices in a collaborative, more efficient way. Programs that implement these Classroom Portfolio strategies will have significantly less Classroom Portfolio evidence and will spend less time documenting how criteria are met.