

14. Authentic Assessment Features

This program presents two portfolios for authentic assessment of student progress. Each portfolio has 37 examples of real student work from which to make judgments. The writing portfolio and the printing portfolio will easily demonstrate the maturity level of the student.

The program recommends an informal approach where the observations are used more for process monitoring than for summative decisions. To strengthen coaches and teachers in this difficult area, the program strongly recommends that they review *Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments*, The National Education Goals Panel, Washington, 1998.

The Writing Portfolio

The writing portfolio is an important element of literacy development. The portfolio offers an opportunity to assess 37 initial writings and compare students' progress against their own record. The device is not only an excellent authentic assessment tool, but it is also an excellent way to communicate student progress to others.

Students who are proficient in writing and constructing their own writings will seldom have trouble reading writings of their own or of others. Included in this effort is an opportunity to construct meaning by the students from within the students' own minds. The more often this is done, the easier it becomes. Parents will long cherish this record of their child's earliest writings.

The Printing Portfolio

The printing portfolio will offer 37 longitudinal examples of the student's printing. Improvement in fine motor control, eye-hand coordination, and letter and word construction will show progress and reveal areas where help can be given. For example, if the student has difficulty constructing shapes, more work may be assigned making straight lines and circles—the building blocks of letter construction. If the student has difficulty with the size of the letters and words, gross activity may be called for—big letters and shapes on larger areas, such as chalkboards or flip chart size paper.

First Compositions and Handwritings

First compositions and handwritings are a record of the emergence of the thought structures known as concrete classifying, ordering, and transforming. These structures and the abilities enabled by them allow young readers to organize the sounds and words used orally and to see how they correspond to written letters and words as they are used in written material. Once this transition to concrete classifying, ordering, and transforming occurs, the student can easily become a reader and writer who is able to encode (write) and decode (read). This transition occurs rapidly in most cases. The 37 handwritings and 37 compositions become a wonderful

record of this powerful event. Whether this program is in school or at home, parents and caregivers should receive the portfolios. This most amazing and cherished record of the child's growth and development will endure far beyond childhood.