

Book Reviews

Kathleen Blake Yancey (Editor).

PORTFOLIOS IN THE WRITING CLASSROOM:

An Introduction

Urbana, Il: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992

136 pp. \$10.50, (NCTE members, \$7.95)

Teachers have many methods of evaluating student writing. One of these involves assessing students with portfolio collections of their writing. Switching to this form of appraisal means that teachers must change the way they approach instruction, process, and evaluation of student writing. Luckily, books such as *Portfolios in the Writing Classroom: An Introduction* help ease the transition by discussing all aspects of portfolio pedagogy. The editor of this book has gathered together essays written by many educators: teachers, professors of education, researchers and administrators who offer practical advice to those interested in using portfolios in their classrooms. Some of the writers even tell about their initial resistance to portfolios and their later conversions. These are the essays that ring with the most conviction as well as the most practical suggestions for converting a classroom to portfolios. All the articles, however, touch on the practical aspects of beginning to use portfolios, choosing what goes into them, evaluating and considering the results. Kathleen Blake Yancey pulls the whole collection together with her introductory and concluding summaries while the book ends with an annotated bibliography, bound to be useful to all educators.

Even though each essay offers overviews of the individual author's experiences with portfolios, some emphasize important points not stressed by others. Sue Gold, for example, in "Increasing Student Autonomy" goes into great detail on the many advantages of portfolio writing. She asserts that portfolios allow students to gain perspectives on their own writing, permit the writers to choose the work they like best and enable them to take risks in writing. Furthermore, portfolios encourage writers to increase their

output and address broad reading audiences. Another author, Catherine D'Aoust, talks in "Portfolios: Process for Students and Teachers" about mundane, but important practical issues. She touches on the actual folders, and what types could be most practical for collecting writing in progress. She discusses where to store the folders and how to make them available to students.

Two essays focus on the important question of who "owns" the portfolios. In "Portfolio Reflections in Middle and Secondary Schools", Roberta Camp suggests that students themselves should choose what goes into the folder, and which pieces the teacher should read. Sandra Murphy and Mary Ann Smith go further in "Looking into Portfolios" by suggesting that the students should not only choose their own pieces for evaluation, but should justify those choices in writing. Evaluation, in fact, is an issue dealt with in almost all the essays. James Newkirk, one of the converts to portfolio assessment, spends a great deal of time in the article "Portfolio Practice in Middle School: One Teacher's Story", discussing the concept of assessment as collaborative, holistic, and goal-oriented. He gives excellent examples that elaborate on these ideas.

Though I have only mentioned a few contributors, the others also shared their personal experiences and practical advice. They suggest ways that teachers could move towards portfolio pedagogy. However, even though teachers will gain many new ideas from the whole text, they may find that the essays tend to repeat themselves. I discovered that I could read three or four of the essays and be familiar with almost all the ideas presented in the book. Nonetheless, this book addresses an important issue in current educational practice in a readable and practical manner.

Audrey Berner
McGill University

D. Greenberg.
A NEW LOOK AT SCHOOLS (1992)
Sudbury, ON: Sudbury Valley School Press
142 pp., \$7

This three-part document focusses on value systems and education with a projection on what we could accomplish if we were able to incorporate the necessary changes to reach a "free democratic" education. Greenberg emphasizes social and educational transformations, presenting a new concept of schooling. In part one, which comprises five chapters, the author