Portfolios: How Can Parents Help?

What is a portfolio? A portfolio is a portable case or folder for holding representative samples of a person’s best work. For years, portfolios have been carried by artists, photographers, and models to show potential employers the quality of work they can do should they be hired for the job.

What then is a math portfolio? It’s when a teacher has students collect samples of their work in their math class and put this work in a folder, or portfolio. This work shows a side of the student that test scores cannot show. In most cases, test scores show how much you studied for the test, and how minor calculation errors might mess up an entire problem. In the workplace, however, what is really important is the quality of work that an employee can generate when given resources, materials, and supplies.

Suggestions for Parents

On a daily basis ask your student about math class. Have a conversation with them about the topics covered while looking over the day’s assignment. Have them verbally summarize the day. Perhaps at the end of each week, help your student identify the main ideas covered in the week. At this time it might be appropriate for them to write part of their summary for the Portfolio Assignment. At the end of the Unit, help them by reading the Portfolio Assignment rough drafts and see if they have included all the necessary elements of the assignment. Is it understandable to someone who wasn’t in the class at the time? Throughout this process, encourage them to rewrite and refine their thinking. Remind them that the Portfolio Assignment should demonstrate the quality of their work in mathematics.

What is quality math work? Quality work is a standard that the teacher will have for how student work looks and its content. Quality work is not just acceptable, it’s exceptional! Some ideas for making sure work is quality work:
• Check work for neatness and ability to be read by others.
• Include pictures, graphs, charts, and drawings when applicable.
• Explain, don’t just write down a few words; explain in detail, so that another student can follow the thoughts.
• Go above and beyond what’s asked for. Add things or do things that aren’t specifically asked for but are related to the problem.

Below is a contract that will aid students in higher grades on tests, portfolios and assignments. Specifically, the student will receive extra-credit for partaking in the agreement. Please read through the agreement and return it no later than ____________________________!

Student Name:________________________

Both Parent and Student agree to read through the following directions for the Portfolio Assignment and the Sample Portfolio Assignment together by ______________. We also agree to work out an on-going schedule to work together on the Portfolio Assignments.

Student Signature/Date  Parent Signature/Date