Portfolio FAQ

General Questions

What are the required components in a portfolio?
- There are three required components including a copy of the completed research-based assessment tool inclusive of all domains, individualized collections, and narrative summary reports.

What is the research-based assessment tool component of the portfolio?
- This is the developmental checklist of the research-based assessment tool your program uses. Terminologies change based upon the tool being used. For example, if using Teaching Strategies GOLD, you are making a rating on all "objectives for development and learning" for each child. If using the Early Learning Scale, you are making a rating for all "strands" for each child.

How often do the portfolio requirements need to be met?
- There are three reporting periods for portfolios including fall (August-Oct/Nov), winter (Nov/Dec-Feb) and spring (March-May)

Do I need documentation for each objective in my research-based assessment tool?
- At minimum, an anecdotal note and the date the document sample was collected is required for all of the benchmarks in the individualized collection component of the portfolio. In order to complete the research-based assessment tool in its entirety, you should have enough information to confidently make a rating on the child's knowledge, skills and abilities as it relates to the indicator/objective in the assessment tool.

Can the portfolio be online or does a paper copy need to be available for assessors to review?
- Portfolios can be stored online. Hard copies are not required.
- Teams should develop instructions for the assessors to access the objectives that are being tracked over time for the individualized collections component of the portfolio.

How many pieces of documentation need to be collected for each child's portfolio?
- There is not a set number of pieces of documentation that need to be included in the child's portfolio. At minimum, there needs to be one example per benchmark, per collection period. Rich pieces of documentation might serve as examples for multiple benchmarks.

Created May 2020

What are the best ways to keep accurate portfolios without taking so much time?
- Implementing a process for systematic observation that includes the entire teaching team is the best way to ensure documentation is ongoing, planned, and documented. Viewing documentation as part of your daily responsibilities, understanding the link between planning and assessment, and being consistent with systematic observation supports teachers in collecting a thorough and accurate picture of children's growth and development. Some teachers find it useful to strategically place post-it notes, notecard, or clipboards in the classroom for easy access or to utilize technology such as cameras, recorder or documentation apps. Refer to your research-based curriculum for specific tools to be efficient in collecting documentation.

Individualized Collections

What are individualized collections?
- The individualized collection component of the portfolio is an opportunity to highlight the strengths, interests and what is unique about the child.

What is required for individualized collections?
- Individualized collections reflect, at a minimum 2 benchmarks from each of the 7 IELDS domains (8 when the child is an English Language Learner), per reporting period.
- Each benchmark must have at minimum one piece of documentation, per reporting period to track progress over time.

Can I choose two objectives from each domain/content area from my research-based assessment tool for individualized collections?
- Teachers should start with the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards and choose two benchmarks from each domain/content area and then use the assessment tool crosswalk with the IELDS. Not all research-based assessment tools have the same domains/content areas. The IELDS provides consistency and continuity for portfolio collection in the state.

How do I choose which benchmarks to use for individualized collections?
- It is recommended for early childhood teams to come together annually to choose benchmarks for the school year that are broad and encompassing and allow for all children to show progress over time. Benchmarks that are very specific, referring to one discrete skill, are not best for individualized collections. It is recommended to use the same benchmarks for all children. Staff can come together every year to evaluate the benchmarks and decide if they want to make any changes for the next school year.

Is it okay to use the same picture for all 20 children in a portfolio? For example, a music experience that all children participated in?
- The key feature of the individualized collections is to highlight individual strengths of children. If the same photo is used for multiple children, the anecdotal note must reflect the individual strengths, needs and abilities of the child.

Created May 2020

What does documentation look like for individualized collections?

- At minimum, an anecdotal note is required for each of the 2 benchmarks from each of the IELDS domains. A high-quality portfolio will incorporate a variety of documentation types (i.e photos, work samples, video and/or audio clips) to provide a well -rounded picture of the child's strengths, knowledge and abilities.

Narrative Summary

What is the purpose of the narrative summary?

- The purpose of the narrative summary is to share assessment information with families in a way that they can understand their child's development, strengths, and what skills will be worked on next.

What are the requirements of the narrative summary?

- A narrative summary must be completed for each child's portfolio. The narrative summary should be completed using a strengths-based approach, highlighting what children are able to do. When considering what form to use to share information with families, keep in mind the form should be simple to understand. Developmental checklists and reports are best for teachers and program purposes. Teachers use their assessment information to highlight a child's development on a narrative summary in ways families can easily understand.

How many narrative summaries are required in the child's portfolio per year?

- The intent of the narrative summary is to provide key developmental information with the family about their child. As such, it is useful to complete the narrative summary for each parent-teacher conference. For the purposes of compliance, one narrative summary report is required per child, per school year. However, best practice recommends completing a narrative summary for each reporting period.