

4.6.1 Evaluation: Student Portfolio

We chose to evaluate the Russian module “Student Portfolio: A ‘bridge’ between school and family” because we felt it was easily transferable to the Scottish school system. It is easy to adapt and contains values and principles which equate with ours.

Curriculum for Excellence, the new curriculum framework in Scottish “Early Years” establishments and schools, considers all aspects of children’s development and not only aims to raise attainment but also to recognise and develop wider achievement. Its focus is on making children confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens.

Many of these elements are reflected in the Russian module which allows us, especially with our modifications, to make links to development work within Curriculum for Excellence in this area. This should help to integrate the portfolio into developing mainstream practice. The focus in Curriculum for Excellence on working with all parents and involving them in their children’s learning also makes this portfolio a valuable tool to support collaborative working between teachers, parents and children.

Our Approach and modifications

As stated in the Russian module:

“A student portfolio serves as a useful guide of school life and may contribute to improving family contacts with school and intensifying the cooperation between parents and the teachers. Family participation in their child’s school life is an essential prerequisite for the learning motivation and the educational success of the child.”

In the evaluation of the student portfolio we are focussing on this element of the portfolio as this is a key element of how we intend to use it in schools. We see it as a tool for recording progress and achievement in all areas of school life as well as interests and successes outwith school. The portfolio would not be used for recording test results or school reports as in the Russian module. These are already kept in school files. The portfolio would contain examples of their home, family, where they came from, activities in school, and activities outside school as well as examples of their school work throughout a school academic year. This would show their academic progress and attainment as well as their achievement in other areas of their school life.

The structure of the portfolio would remain very similar to the Russian model but we wouldn’t use Part 2 of the Russian module (i.e. tests and school reports as previously explained) nor its Part 6 which we think is too formal and which we would approach in a more informal way, as explained below.

Our revised draft structure

Part 1 *About Myself:* When students first arrive they can write, draw pictures or bring in pictures of their family, previous school, hobbies etc. As well as helping the student to settle in to a new environment this can give us an insight into the family and previous school history of the student

Part 2 *Achievements and results:* Certificates, diplomas and rewards which the student has won would be included. These need not only be school certificates but could also be for activities outside school: e.g. swimming, football etc.

Part 3 *School work:* The students together with their parents and teachers can collect work from school activities – photographs, topic work in picture or written form, hand made articles, class written work the students are proud of.

Part 4 *Comments from teachers /students themselves:* The students and teachers would be encouraged to write comments beside items put into the portfolio. The comments could be to explain why that item was chosen by the student or teacher or the teacher could be in praise of the item.

Instead of the Russian Part 6, at the end of the academic year the students would be encouraged to look back in their portfolio to see how much their work had progressed in that year. This would be a celebration of their achievements in all areas, not just academic subjects. We would hope it would encourage them to continue working hard in order to progress further during the next academic year.

Dissemination and awareness-raising

Dissemination of the idea has started initially through sharing the idea with EAL staff, Early Years' teachers and workers, Quality Improvement officers and a Depute Director of Education. Discussion with EAL staff has been part of our initial evaluation of the project and supported the planning of how the Bilingual Support Service sees that the portfolio could be used in our context. They have worked with one of the partners to discuss the necessary adaptations to the Russian module.

The other partner has had discussions with various Early Years' establishments, and examples are being collated of how they are recording pupil progress and achievement to inform the development of this portfolio. This interaction is a two-way process and our work should also inform their development and help establishments to incorporate the portfolio idea into their own practice. This supports sustainability.

The partner will then explore developments in other sectors for the same purpose and has also highlighted this portfolio in relation to current Early Years developments to the relevant Quality Improvement Officer. The partner has, in addition, spoken on the topic of Early Years developments to authority Early Years staff and has discussed the portfolio with her line manager, a Deputy Director of Educational and Social Services, who could see its potential to fit into and support current mainstream development work. The idea has been mentioned in a report compiled by this Deputy Director for the Corporate Equalities Group.

EAL staff will drive the pilot of this portfolio by working with pupils, parents and teachers on how to compile the portfolio and support its production. Collaborative working is an effective way of training people.