

Tips for Portfolio Advisors

Using the New Portfolio Development Guide to Enhance FDC Portfolio Advisement

In *The Learning Portfolio: Reflective Practice for Improving Student Learning*, John Zubizarreta writes that portfolios are commonly used in areas such as business, fine arts, creative writing and teacher education to assess a student's growth during a particular course. He believes that an underlying role of portfolio development is not just to chronicle skills development, but to help students articulate *how* and *why* learning has occurred.

Here are some tips for using the new rubric to enhance FDC portfolio advisement:

- 1) **Using the rubric, invite workers to identify learning objectives they wish to demonstrate for a chapter *first*.** Then, help workers choose Activities and the Skills Practice that achieve the objectives in concrete ways. This approach allows workers to utilize goal-setting (to cover four learning objectives for each chapter) with emphasis on self-directed learning.
- 2) **Encourage workers to use personal and professional resources to improve their writing and expressive skills.** For workers with writing difficulties, suggest that they ask a colleague or friend to proofread portfolio work before submission. Learn the locations of local libraries with computer access and, if needed, link workers with community-based literacy programs. Recommend that workers use Spell Check, a print or on-line dictionary or thesaurus and help workers cite the text without plagiarizing (re-writing the FDC text as a partial response).
- 3) The new rubric does not assess workers' spelling or grammar. However, **it is more empowering (for you and the advisee) to address common spelling errors than to ignore them.** Use "peripheral vision" to focus on strengths in the portfolio work, but don't be "blind" to helping a worker prepare and submit her or his best work.
- 4) **Don't be afraid to ask for written elaboration on Activities to Extend Learning responses or Skills Practice Reflections** that are incomplete or nominal. In general, "what" questions may be elaborated upon with an illustration or example. Responses to "how" questions may elaborate on the range of options, and then present the worker's rationale for her/his decision based on applying new knowledge and understanding

The essence of effective portfolio development is, and has always been, to support workers' skills development and self-empowerment through the FDC course.

Over the next year, we look forward to sharing information on outcomes of workers' learning and skills development as a result of implementing the new guide.