Table of Contents

Purpose of the Portfolio.................................................................2
Collecting Items for Your Portfolio ..............................................2
Freshman and Sophomore Portfolio Conferences .......................3
The Junior Portfolio Defense .........................................................3
The New School’s Essential Skills .................................................4
Community Service Guidelines .....................................................6
Completed Portfolio Checklist .......................................................7
Portfolio Conference Evaluation Rubric ........................................8

Appendices

Community Service Log Sheet....................................................10
Portfolio Item Reflection Sheet....................................................11
Portfolio Conference Prep Form ..................................................12
Purpose of the Portfolio

Portfolios are an integral form of authentic assessment at The New School. Students in grades 9 – 11 are required to work toward completion of a portfolio that shows the student’s growth and mastery of the twelve essential skills.

Collecting Items for Your Portfolio

At the end of each quarter, students should select items of relevant class and other work that demonstrate their progress in the essential skills. In subsequent quarters, items demonstrating the same skill should be added to the portfolio. Although later work may be of better quality than earlier pieces, students should not remove earlier items, as a collection of items demonstrating a skill and its development is the best way to show growth toward mastery. By the end of the third quarter each student (freshmen, sophomores, and juniors) should complete the portfolio selection form for each skill and review the portfolio’s contents with his/her advisor.

Portfolio Items can be anything. They can consist of, but are not limited to, tests, papers, worksheets, designs, CDs or DVDs of work, artwork, graphs, essays, creative writing, event programs, website, posters, log books, awards, computer programs, narrative reflections, and photos of events or things too big to include in the portfolio. The chosen items should be representative of the student’s continued development toward mastery of the skill, whether in or outside of school. The portfolio does not have to be limited to a binder. Several students have successfully developed and maintained digital portfolios. Items should not be included or excluded simply on the basis of the letter grade.

Narrative reflections in essay form are also acceptable as secondary portfolio items. A student may write about an experience where they used or learned a skill, and what they gained from the experience. Narrative reflections may be supported by further documentation, such as photographs, letters, and videos.

Don’t limit yourself to obvious items. Think outside the box!

Here are some examples of portfolio items:

- A Junior used pictures, his calendar and a letter of appreciation to explain how he used the skill of “managing materials and time to accomplish goals” to get through his Eagle Scout project successfully.
- Another Junior talked about the process of rewriting and finding just the right words while showing her scrapbook collection of song lyrics, for the skill of “persisting to achieve quality.”
- A Freshman showed the results of a group project, and explained how he learned how to work better with his fellow students to achieve their goals for the skill of “working collaboratively.”
- A Sophomore talked about the difficulties of building a major set piece, pointing to items with measurements, designs, photos and a theatre program for the skill of “solving problems.”
- Another used several Spanish vocabulary quizzes and a paragraph in Spanish about a movie they had watched to show how she was “making connections and putting information into context.”
- Last year, several students used their Geometry class ABC Book for “working creatively” and others used carefully drawn illustrations from their biology lab-books for the same skill.
- One student, for the skill of “thinking and acting ethically,” wrote several paragraphs about what she learned about the difficulty of making fair decisions while serving on the Fairness Committee.
- A Sophomore recorded a skit in French for “communicating effectively.”
- Another student wrote about an experience in one of her community service activities, describing how she came to “appreciate and understand different perspectives” in that situation, and explained how she is now more capable of applying the skill to future situations.
- One Sophomore was proud of how she basically taught herself a chapter of Geometry, “working independently,” but was then able to “work collaboratively” by helping a fellow student with the concepts.
- A student, who has since graduated, “researched effectively” through decades of old movies and photographs for the costumes of a major play, and then wrote a research paper about the subject.

**Freshman and Sophomore Portfolio Conferences**

By the fourth quarter of the school year, each student will lead a portfolio conference with their advisor, at least one other teacher, parents, and interested others. The purpose of this conference is to check-in on the student’s portfolio progress, identify areas of accomplishment and need for improvements, and consider course choices for the following academic year. This also prepares the student for their Junior Portfolio Defense.

**The Junior Portfolio Defense**

Early in the fourth quarter of a student’s junior year, he/she is required to have a completed portfolio. The junior presents the portfolio to a review committee consisting of his/her advisor, at least one other teacher, parents, and interested others. The committee discusses not only individual items but also the strengths and weaknesses of the junior’s skills. A successful portfolio review during junior year indicates a student’s readiness to begin work on the Senior Exhibition and establishes eligibility for Senior Privileges. Following verification of a successful portfolio defense, pending parental approval (see Val for forms), Senior Privileges may begin in the final quarter of junior year. Students who enter The New School as juniors must still complete the Portfolio requirement by the end of junior year (an exception is made for the community service requirement until after the summer). Some portfolio items may be samples of work from the student’s previous high school.

Students who have not completed their portfolios are not eligible for Senior Privileges. They are also in danger of failing the Senior Exhibition process.
The New School’s 12 Essential Skills

Following is a list of skills The New School considers essential for our students to master before graduating. In compiling this list, we have consulted members of the Coalition of Essential Schools, college professors, and business people to make it as meaningful as possible.

The person's relationship with others:
1. Acting in the benefit of the community
   a. Recognize you are part of a community and/or communities
   b. Understand the needs of the community
   c. Decide how you can fulfill the needs of the community
   d. Compromise if the needs of the community are different than yours
   e. See your actions through to the end
2. Thinking and acting ethically
   a. Recognize others and the community
   b. Consider and understand your actions before you act
   c. Perceive positive and negative consequences for others, yourself and the environment for all actions
   d. Accept and deal with consequences
3. Working collaboratively
   a. Listen and respond appropriately
   b. Construct and follow group guidelines
   c. Assign, understand and complete tasks on time
   d. Follow class guidelines
   e. Contribute individually to the goals of the group or class

The person's ability to express him or herself:
4. Communicating effectively
   a. Understand subject matter
   b. Conceptualize or outline the subject to be communicated
   c. Translate the concept into a meaningful visual, oral, written, or musical form
   d. Transmit the concept clearly, concisely and appropriately
5. Working creatively
   a. Recognize habits and methods of yourself and others in the field of study and community
   b. Understand the purpose of the habits and methods of yourself and others in the field of study and community
   c. Experiment with different materials, concepts and purposes in relation to the context of those habits and methods
   d. Design new methods by combining elements from different habits and methods
6. Solving problems
   a. Recognize the opportunity to solve problems
   b. Define or formulate the problem or question
   c. Brainstorm possible solutions
   d. Test and evaluate solutions
   e. Verify the process
The New School’s 12 Essential Skills, continued

The person’s ability to discover and construct answers:
7. Persisting in achieving quality
   a. Identify quality work
   b. Integrate feedback appropriately
   c. Redo or rework projects/work/papers/experiments

8. Applying effective research methods
   a. Find information
   b. Formulate a question
   c. Collect appropriate information
   d. Organize information
   e. Make information meaningful

9. Managing materials and time to accomplish goals
   a. Organize sub-tasks of projects
   b. Determine materials needed for each sub-task
   c. Establish the time needed for each sub-task
   d. Set a realistic plan and timeline
   e. Stick to the plan and timeline

The person’s ability to think critically:
10. Working independently
    a. Complete homework and class work
    b. Work without supervision
    c. Be prepared for class/task/project/etc.
    d. Take chances by making choices

11. Appreciating and understanding different perspectives
    a. Suspend your judgment, open your mind and receive the whole perspective
    b. Put yourself in another person’s shoes
    c. Be able to argue the other person’s perspective
    d. Evaluate the perspective’s authenticity
    e. Respond and react to evaluation ethically

12. Making connections and being aware of context
    a. Recognize the importance of information you already know
    b. Look at the subject in relationship to its context
    c. Recognize similarities and differences between what you already know about the subject and new information learned about the subject
    d. Analyze the significance of those similarities and differences
    e. Synthesize the information to gain new knowledge
Community Service Guidelines

One of our Essential Skills is “serving and acting in the benefit of the community.” Toward that end, The New School requires every student to serve his/her various communities as part of his/her portfolio requirement.

Students are required to complete 60 hours of community service by the end of the third quarter of junior year. Students may serve these hours at any number of organizations whose expressed purpose is first and foremost to benefit their community. They may serve up to 20 of their hours by helping out at officially sanctioned New School activities. Students earning hours at The New School must receive signed permission from the HS Director.

We recommend 20 hours of community service during freshman, sophomore, and junior years in order to complete the 60-hour goal. Summers are also a great time for students to complete their hours. Students who join The New School during their sophomore or junior years must still complete 60 hours of community service. We recognize that this might prove difficult for those juniors who have not acquired any community service hours prior to coming to The New School. Thus, these students will be given until the beginning of their senior year to complete this requirement without suffering any consequences.

Documenting Community Service Hours and Establishing Accountability:

Students will be given a Community Service Log Sheet to include in their portfolio. This form is also available in the Media Center. After the students complete a community service event, they will record the date, the name of the organization, the duties performed, and the number of hours worked. If the hours were served at The New School, the HS Director also needs to sign off on them. During the final portfolio review in the spring, advisors will check that all hours have been documented correctly on the submitted sheets. Students should provide contact information, so advisors are able to contact the organization for verification of service. Letters from organizations, including hours served, are also welcome as verification of service. They are also very useful in the college and scholarship application process. Photographs, videos, etc. may be included as supplementary documentation, but do not take the place of the Log Sheet.

Consequences for Failing to Complete Community Service Hours:

Completion of required community service hours is mandatory for students to pass the portfolio defense, become seniors and receive senior privileges.

What Does Not Count Toward Community Service Hours?
1. Work done for friends or family (because it is expected that you will serve those closest to you)
2. Work done to serve a class (because that is viewed as normal school duties)
3. Work done for pay (because that’s not volunteering)

What Does Count Toward Community Service Hours?
1. Volunteering at a school-sponsored community service event, examples include, but are not limited to, the Rudolph Run and Open Houses
2. Arranging volunteer opportunities on your own time (such as helping at a soup kitchen)
3. Volunteering for any Not-For-Profit Organization, including unpaid internships
Completed Portfolio Checklist

A ‘completed portfolio’ is an organized selection of your work and accomplishments throughout your high school career. In order to successfully pass your Junior Portfolio Conference the following items are required:

- At least one item, although multiple items are preferred, demonstrating understanding of each Essential Skill:
  - Acting in the benefit of the community
  - Thinking and acting ethically
  - Working collaboratively
  - Communicating effectively
  - Working creatively
  - Solving problems
  - Persisting in achieving quality
  - Applying effective research methods
  - Managing materials and time to accomplish goals
  - Working independently
  - Appreciating and understanding different perspectives
  - Making connections and being aware of context

- At least one research paper demonstrating mastery of research skills, including the mechanics of in-text and bibliographic citations

- Documentation of 60 Community Service Hours, verified by a filled-out and signed Community Service Log Sheet and/or letters of commendation, including hours served, from your community service supervisor(s).

For each item you must complete a Portfolio Item Reflection Sheet or write a paragraph explaining why the item has been included for the chosen skill. A definition, in your own words, is good to have for each skill. These summaries are instrumental during the portfolio preparation and review process.

Extra copies of the Portfolio Item Reflection Sheets, Community Service Log Sheets, and Portfolio Conference Prep Forms are located in the Library Media Center and can also be obtained through your advisor.
**Essential Skills Evaluation Rubric**

The student must have at least one item demonstrating their achievement for each Essential Skill. At the Freshman or Sophomore Portfolio Conferences and the Junior Portfolio Defense, the assembled parties will evaluate each skill as one of the following:

- **Missing / Fails**: None or no appropriate items. The student has little to no understanding of the skill.
- **Approaches**: The student demonstrates awareness of what the skill means, has understanding of what the skill entails, and can provide a reasonable example. This is acceptable for freshman and first year ESOL students.
- **Meets**: The student demonstrates understanding and use of the skill according to the provided rubric. 
  
  **Juniors must meet the standard in order to pass!**
- **Advanced**: The student demonstrates deeper cognitive understanding, and discusses several appropriate items that indicate college level mastery of this skill.

Below is a rubric for what “meets” each Essential Skill:

**Acting in the benefit of the community**

During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of recognizing that he is a part of a community and/or communities, understanding the needs of the community, deciding how he can help fulfill the needs of the community, making compromises if the needs of the community are different than his own, and seeing his actions through to the end.

**Thinking and acting ethically**

During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of recognizing others and the community, considering and understanding actions before he acts, perceiving positive and negative consequences for himself, others, the community and the environment for all actions, accepting and dealing with consequences.

**Working collaboratively**

During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of listening and responding appropriately, constructing and following group/class guidelines, following group/class guidelines, and contributing individually to the goals of the group/class.

**Communicating effectively**

During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of understanding a subject and/or concept, conceptualizing or outlining the subject and/or concept and translating it into an appropriate meaningful visual, oral, written, physical or musical form.

**Working creatively**

During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of recognizing habits and methods of himself and others in the field of study and creative community, understand the purpose of the habits of methods of himself and others, experimenting with different materials, concepts and purposes in relation to the context of those habits and methods, and designing new methods by combining elements from different habits and methods. The student shows that he is capable of self reflection with growing awareness of identity, emotions and choices, as well as soliciting, selecting and processing feedback instrumental to the developmental process.
Solving problems
During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of recognizing the opportunity to solve problems, defining and/or formulating the problem or question, brainstorming possible solutions, testing and evaluating solutions, and verifying the process.

Persisting in achieving quality
During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of identifying quality work, integrating feedback appropriately and redoing and/or reworking projects, assignments, papers, experiments, etc. to achieve quality.

Applying effective research methods
During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of finding information, formulating questions, collecting and organizing appropriate information, assessing information and making information meaningful. (Although not necessarily required for this skill, at least one research paper demonstrating mastery of research skills and the mechanics of in-text and bibliographic citations must be included somewhere in the portfolio.)

Managing materials and time to accomplish goals
During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of managing materials and time to accomplish goals by identifying and organizing sub-tasks of projects, determining materials needed for each sub-task, setting a realistic plan and timeline and sticking to the plan and timeline.

Working independently
During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of completing assignments, being prepared for tasks, of working without supervision, of making choices and assessing his progress toward stated goals.

Appreciating and understanding different perspectives
During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he is capable of suspending his judgment, opening his mind and receiving the whole perspective, putting himself in another person’s shoes, arguing the other person’s perspective, evaluating the perspective’s authenticity and responding to the evaluation ethically.

Making connections and being aware of context
During the explanation of his portfolio items, the student has shown that he recognizes the importance of knowledge he already knows, can look at the subject in relationship to its context, can recognize similarities between what he knows and new information learned, and is capable of making connections that show he is aware of the context.