



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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November 15, 2010

TO: Chief School Administrators
Lead persons – Charter Schools
Language Arts Supervisors - Elementary
First Grade Teachers

FROM: Mary Jane Kurabinski, Director
Office of Language Arts Literacy Education

RE: BEST WORKS Portfolio

Very shortly you will be receiving a call from your County Education Office to either pick up or arrange for delivery of portfolios for your school. The portfolios are being piloted this academic year – November through June – with first grade teachers and students. Please ensure delivery to the classrooms of your first grade teachers.

We have designed, printed and will deliver a portfolio for each first grade student. Teachers are asked to use the portfolio as a “showcase” portfolio of a student’s work. The portfolio is intended – over time – to show a student’s development as he/she becomes a reader and writer. At the end of third grade, the portfolio belongs to the student and his or her family. We recommend that a celebration be held for third graders, allowing them to reflect about their development as they learned to read and write.

It is critical that as children learn to read and write they reflect upon what they are doing. Mature readers internalize the process and as children learn, they need to think about that process and about what they are doing to comprehend text and to write. The portfolio is designed to capture that development through the collection of samples. Each child should collect at least one sample per year that he/she chooses. The other 2-3 samples are collected in collaboration with the teacher. The writing and assignment of reading are not intended to be whole class projects. Quite the contrary, students and teachers should be looking at, and talking about, work that is meaningful to each student. There is ample room

to record conference dates. Student work can be annotated, particularly during the early stages of becoming a writer. We are confident that the portfolio will provide the framework in which all of this can happen.

In the spring we will ask first grade teachers to provide some feedback to us about the portfolio so that we can refine it and ensure that it meets the needs of your teachers and students. This portfolio should then follow the students to second grade. Eventually, all Pre-K students will open their portfolio as soon as they enter and that portfolio – and its contents – will follow the children through third grade.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at mary-jane.kurabinski@doe.state.nj.us or at 609-633-1726.

We look forward to your feedback.

c: Willa Spicer
Executive County Superintendents
County Education Specialists
NJLEE Group
Garden State Coalition of Schools