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5 Things to Know About . . . Creating Portfolios

Portfolio documentation is an essential part of the NAEYC early learning accreditation process. Here are some tips on how to create a smooth process for portfolio creation.

1. Start Early!

To create new portfolios with the least amount of stress, plan to give yourself a year before submitting candidacy or your 4th annual report . This gives you the opportunity to work on one standard per month and have a two month cushion for changes and edits.

2. Create a Team

Building NAEYC portfolios is a big job;use a team approach. Teaching teams working with the same age category can create one shared portfolio. Each classroom "owns" a set of standards and collects evidence across the entire center. For a program portfolio, other administration staff can help gather evidence or use family volunteers to help! Also, make sure to add a peer review process to ensure that all items are accounted for and the content makes sense to someone other than the

3. Get the Right Equipment

In order to make portfolio creation as easy as possible, you need to have the right materials. For paper portfolios, you want to think about sorting of containers such as binders, crates,and accordion files? If you are doing digital portfolios, be sure that everyone has computer access and understands how to save their work and how to share it. A flash drive for each portfolio or online platform like Google Drive or Microsoft 360 have sharing features.

4. Provide Time and Space

In order to work efficiently on portfolios, you and the educators are going to need two things that are highly coveted in early childhood programs—time and space! Identify a space in the program that you can devote to portfolio work. It is helpful to have a table to spread out along with access to a computer and printer if possible. The less you have to walk around to get things, the more work you can get done. Regular scheduled portfolio work is useful as this work is different from the work that happens in the classroom and it's helpful to separate it. It's important that educators have time during the work day to complete these tasks which means you might need to adjust your staffing patterns.

5. Use NAEYC Resources

You can find lots of resources for accreditation on the NAEYC website including portfolio tools and templates. The downloadableProgram Portfolio Tool and Class Portfolio Tools are extremely useful when you begin. They provide a list of all of the items necessary for your portfolios. You can also print portfolio labels for paper portfolios to label your collected evidence. If you need more information about creating digital portfolios, there are videos to walk you through the process here.

Bonus Tip!

Organize, organize, organize- Use highlighters, post-its or any other tool to make things clear as possible. For digital portfolios you can highlight important information right on the screen. And don't forget: QUALITY OVER QUANTITY.