

# **The Graduate Reading Program Portfolio Development Process**

The School of Education at Concordia University Wisconsin prepares teachers to help their students to develop in mind, body, and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and the world.

## **Rationale and Concept**

Recognizing that reflective, concerned, and competent teachers develop from a multitude of unique abilities and experiences, Concordia's graduate reading program encourages the cultivation of unique, well-rounded reading teacher and/or reading specialist candidates. Concordia has instituted the portfolio process which seeks to provide a more personal reflection of the unique abilities and accomplishments of each graduate reading student.

The graduate reading portfolio is an electronic collection of materials that indicates participant progress toward a variety of professional competencies in reading. By the end of the program experience, a final product portfolio will have been compiled which will provide a sound representation of the graduate reading completer and her knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

## **Purpose**

The portfolio:

- provides a more complete picture of the student's unique interests, abilities, and accomplishments;
- encourages the student's organizational skills, self-assessment of growth, and awareness of future educational needs;
- furnishes substance for mentoring by advisors;
- equips the student with a rich, illustrative record of achievement for presentations to future employers upon completion;
- supplies tangible evidence for program assessment for the Graduate Reading Program of Concordia University Wisconsin.

### **Please Note:**

The graduate reading portfolio process at Concordia University Wisconsin utilizes an electronic portfolio and not a hard copy, paper submission. Students construct portfolios using the LiveText program, which may be accessed at [www.livetext.com](http://www.livetext.com). The student subscription costs \$89, and it is valid during the full time of one's graduate student enrollment plus one additional year.

# Portfolio Evaluations

Throughout the graduate reading program experience each student will maintain a working growth portfolio. Students may add and/or remove artifacts that they think are representative of their personal growth and achievements as they proceed through their coursework and practicum experiences. For graduate reading students working to complete the #316 Reading Teacher licensure requirements, there are two required portfolio evaluations. Those students seeking to complete the requirements for the #17 Reading Specialist license will have three required portfolio adjudication sessions:

- **Portfolio I : Foundational Understanding (EDG 627/827 Portfolio I)**

Graduate reading students must first complete a baseline of courses successfully before embarking upon the portfolio process. At least nine credits, but not more than fifteen credits, should be completed by the candidate prior to this adjudication:

EDG 552/852	Improvement in the Teaching of Reading
EDG 509/809	Integrating Learning Skills Across the Curriculum
EDG 556/856	Language Arts for the Teacher of Reading
EDG 576/876	K-12 Literature
EDG 537/837	Supervision of Instruction (#17 license candidates only)
EDG 507/807	Curriculum Development (#17 license candidates only)

A LiveText ([www.livetext.com](http://www.livetext.com)) subscription is required to begin the portfolio construction process. Once LiveText registration is completed and the participant has an account, she may select **Portfolios** from the left-hand toolbar. Next choose **Create** from the top row of tab choices. On the following screen, when prompted to choose a folder, one will select **Portfolios** under the LiveText listing in the drop-down menu entitled **1. Choose a folder**. Under **2. Choose a template**, one should select the **Blank Portfolio** option. In the next section, **3. Enter title and description**, the participant should use her full name as part of the title so that faculty adjudicators will be able to locate it easily for review. Creating a description is optional.

The **Help** tab found on the MyDesk page of LiveText for registered users offers step-by-step instructions for creating the five required pages of the online portfolio: one for each of the five standards for reading professionals developed by the IRA. For the first portfolio review, students should align the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Standards for Reading Teachers and Reading Specialists (93 standards) with the five standards for reading professionals developed by the IRA. (Visit [http://www.ira.org/resources/issues/reports/professional\\_standards.html](http://www.ira.org/resources/issues/reports/professional_standards.html) and select “Standards for Reading Professionals” to view them.) Please detail on each of the five portfolio pages which of the Wisconsin standards fit with each IRA standard. This alignment may be represented on an embedded table or as a keyboarded overview on each portfolio page, but the Wisconsin standards should be offered as full statements (rather than merely a shorthand code of numbers and letters) and clearly correlated to the five “overarching themes” provided by the five IRA standards.

Additionally, on each of the five LiveText portfolio pages, students will write a rationale statement regarding each standard. This rationale will restate the standard in their own words, articulate the importance of the standard, and reference personal anecdotes and/or artifacts from teaching which illustrate proficiency in the standard. In **Portfolio I**, the inclusion of artifacts would be required for two of the five standards: Standard 1(Foundational Knowledge) and Standard 4 (Creating a Literate

Environment). *Within the guide a sample “rationale” for Standard I has been provided as an example.*

At the time of Portfolio I submission, the candidate should also complete “Graduate Reading Portfolio Assessment Rubric” and submit it to the adjudicator electronically as an attachment. The faculty reviewer will also complete a written assessment on the portfolio using the same rubric form.

- **Portfolio II : Practical Understanding (EDG 628/828 Portfolio II)**

This portfolio evaluation should occur after the completion of EDG 554/854 Practicum in Reading.

Participants will be expected to have six to ten exceptional pieces of evidence for each of the five standards. Moreover, the original rationales should be updated to reflect the deepened pedagogy and theoretical underpinning of the student while also referencing the chosen artifacts specifically.

Finally, the graduate student should draft a cover letter to a school district (real or fictitious) as if the student were applying for a Reading Teacher position in the school district. The letter should detail the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the teaching of reading possessed by the candidate, and it should be posted on LiveText for review by the portfolio adjudicator.

As a matter of procedure, at the time of Portfolio II submission, the candidate should also complete “Graduate Reading Portfolio Assessment Rubric” and submit it to the adjudicator electronically as an attachment. The faculty reviewer will also complete a written assessment on the portfolio using the same rubric form.

- **Portfolio III: Professional and Administrative Understanding (EDG 629/829 Portfolio III [#17 Candidates only])**

The final portfolio evaluation should occur after the completion of the EDG 596/896 Internship in Education course and should be viewed as a capstone element in the graduate reading program.

Participants will be required to have eight to ten exemplary artifacts for each of the five standards. The rationale statements should be updated again to illustrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a skilled practitioner who is now ready to assume the role of reading specialist.

The final requirement is the addition of a cover letter to a school district (real or fictitious) to which the candidate is making application for a Reading Specialist position in the school district. The letter should showcase the solid and varied skill set of the individual, and it should also be posted on LiveText for review by the portfolio adjudicator.

At the time of submission, the graduation candidate also should complete the “Graduate Reading Portfolio Assessment Rubric” and submit it to the adjudicator electronically as an attachment. The faculty reviewer will also complete a final written assessment on the portfolio using the same rubric form.

**Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge**

**Candidates have knowledge of the foundations of reading and writing processes and instruction.**

As a classroom teacher, I have come to realize how crucial the language arts are to everything I do with my class. During my undergraduate education, I learned the basics about reading and writing instruction; but I did not understand the concepts fully because I had such limited experience with actual learners. When I left student teaching and began in my own classroom, I quickly learned how those “theories” from college were relevant to my everyday work! As I now pursue graduate education in reading, it is even more imperative that I can understand and articulate the foundational theory upon which best practices are built.

The IRA Standard 1 for Reading Professionals is so important for classroom professionals because it considers all aspects of language development: psychological, sociological, and linguistic. It requires an understanding of “where we’ve been” as teachers of reading, and it expects teachers to connect that history to today’s research on best practices. I especially like how the standard considers cultural and linguistic diversity because that is a major component of my school’s work and mission. Finally, this standard connects well with a lot of what I have been learning in my coursework so far: the importance of phonemic awareness, strategies for phonics instruction, accessing students’ schema during instruction, providing comprehension strategies, and gauging student motivation.

I have selected several artifacts to demonstrate my knowledge, skill, and dispositions regarding this standard at this point in my graduate education. One artifact is a *miscue analysis* I completed with each student in my class as part of a “homework” assignment for one of my graduate reading courses. Working individually with each child on this assessment, I started to appreciate both the unique reading needs and abilities of each child as well as some instructional strategies I could use in class to target those needs. I have also included an *article review* I did on the topic of ELL learners. This was an important assignment for me because my school serves a significant number of ELL learners, and I wanted to understand how other schools were addressing those needs. Finally, I have also included an *interview analysis* I completed with a senior member of my school faculty as part of a course assignment. Talking with someone who has been teaching for almost forty years helped me understand how much reading instruction has changed. First I found it hard to believe how limited reading materials were in the early 1970’s, but then I realized how much we as educators have learned and how much our instructional materials of today are beginning to reflect our new understandings about language acquisition and literacy development.