

Personal Learning Portfolios &
Student-Led Conferences

A Handbook for Students

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

- A. Overview
- B. Rationale

SECTION 1: A Look Inside

- A. Personal Learning Portfolio Contents
- B. Suggested Formats

SECTION 2: Roles in the Portfolio Process

- A. The Role of the Student
- B. The Role of the Portfolio Coach
- C. The Role of the Parent/Invited Guest

SECTION 3: Preparation and Development

- A. Introducing the Portfolio Process
- B. Developing a Personal Goal
- C. Collecting Student Work Samples
- D. Selecting Exemplary Work

SECTION 4: The Student-Led Conference

- A. Preparing for the Conference
- B. Conducting the Conference
- C. Reflecting on the Conference

SECTION 5: Models and Samples

- A. Sample Goals
- B. Sample Student, Parent/Invited Guest Reflections
- C. Sample Portfolio Coach Reflections

SECTION 6: Templates and Forms

- A.** Personal Learning Portfolio Tables of Contents by Grade-Level (Pre-PLP Development)
- B.** Individualized Goal Setting Form (Pre-SLC)
- C.** Student Letter to Parent/Invited Guest (Pre-SLC)
- D.** Student Reflection on Individual Work Samples (Pre-SLC)
- E.** Parent/Invited Guest: Questions and Feedback (During SLC)
- F.** Portfolio Coach and Parent/Invited Guest - Written Feedback (Post SLC)
- G.** School-Wide Rubrics for Assessment (During SLC)

SECTION 8: Additional Resources

- A.** HVRHS Schedule (2016-2017)
- B.** Calendar for Portfolio Development and SLCs
- C.** Assessments Relevant to the Table of Contents

HVRHS Core Values

The HVRHS community promotes personal and academic growth, as well as independence of thought and spirit for all its members, within a culture of respect, responsibility and safety. The core values that support this statement include a commitment to 21st century academic expectations which encourage all members to grow to their potential, accept and respect different learning styles, solve problems and think analytically, and communicate their ideas effectively. Members of the school community are also expected to make ethical choices, demonstrate social and civic responsibility, and show pride and care for the school and its environment.

INTRODUCTION

A. Overview

A Personal Learning Portfolio (PLP) is a compilation of the best work that you have developed throughout the year. At the beginning of the school year, you will be provided a Table of Contents comprised of focus areas, targeted academic skills, and standards. Working with a Portfolio Coach, you will develop and add to the Table of Contents your own goal. Throughout the year, you will compile assignments and assessments that you feel demonstrate your strongest effort and achievement where each area of focus is concerned. As the portfolio is being developed, student peers and your Portfolio Coach will provide ongoing feedback and recommendations.

Towards the end of each semester, you will lead a conference at which you present the contents of your Personal Learning Portfolio, provide insight into each piece's development and revision, and reflect upon the learning that occurred throughout the portfolio development process. Using rubrics, questions, and short writing prompts, your Portfolio Coach, and a parent or invited guest, will provide feedback on your portfolio presentation, praising the strengths evident in the work being showcased, and recommending areas for further growth.

Finally, you will have the opportunity to revise your personal goals and, at year's end, develop a draft goal for the next school year.

B. Rationale

Student-led Conferences and the underlying portfolio development process encourage you to take greater control of your learning. Working in mixed grade level PLP groups, you will develop supportive relationships and sharpen your collaboration, communication, and social skills. You will also be provided an audience that offers descriptive, specific, and non-judgmental feedback.

Personal Learning Portfolios allow you to establish individualized goals and select the work of which you are most proud. You will share your successes with those individuals who matter most to you. In preparing for and conducting the SLC, you will further develop those skills associated with effective organization, advanced planning, and presentation.

Upon successful completion of your annual PLP, and after leading two SLCs (one near the end of each semester), you will earn .25 course credits. PLP development and presentation will be a four-year graduation requirement for all students, pending review and approval by the Region One Board of Education in September.

SECTION 1: A Look Inside

A. Personal Learning Portfolio (PLP) Contents

In order for a portfolio to be considered complete and ready for presentation, it must contain the following:

1. a grade-specific Table of Contents that associates the work you selected with each of the portfolio's focus areas and individualized goals;
2. final or most recent drafts of each work sample being showcased in the portfolio. Rough drafts and related assignments that will help demonstrate learning are strongly encouraged;
3. a written reflection on each work sample that you have included in the portfolio, composed using the template provided in Section 6;
4. copies of any developmental feedback that you received from PLP group members or the PLP Coach;
5. written feedback forms from the PLP Coach and Parent/Invited Guest, and the school-wide rubric that has been associated with your grade level, completed by your PLP coach.

B. Suggested Formats

The Digital Portfolio

This format requires you to collect and organize work in your school-provided Google Drive. You would first create a folder for each focus area from the Table of Contents, and copy work from a variety of classes into each folder. In addition to docs, sheets, and forms, this might include video and audio files, digital photographs (or digital photographs of projects in non-digital formats), and links to websites you developed.

The Physical Portfolio

A physical portfolio requires that you collect and organize physical copies of your work in a binder or accordian-file portfolio. A section in the binder or file is reserved for each focus area from the Table of Contents, with work from a variety of subject areas kept in each section.

The Mixed Media Portfolio

In this case, photographs, artwork, and other presentation materials are gathered alongside the digital portfolio. You collect and organize copies of your work both in their school-provided Google Drive and in a binder or accordian-file portfolio. Your Portfolio Coaches will work with you to determine how best to alternate between formats during the student-led conference.

SECTION 2: ROLES IN THE PORTFOLIO PROCESS

A. The Role of the Student

You assume the most active role in the portfolio's development and presentation. You will begin by creating an individualized goal, which can be academic, behavioral, personal, or social. This goal is added to your portfolio's Table of Contents. Throughout the semester, you will amass a variety of work samples that evidence proof of your learning. Ongoing conversations with student peers and the Portfolio Coach will enable you to cull from their pool of work samples those pieces that represent your best work and can be clearly linked to the focus areas defined on the Table of Contents.

Having completed the portfolio, you will next invite individuals who are invested in your learning, or whom you would like to see invested in their learning, to the SLC. Although it is desirable to have one or more parents/guardians present, invited guests might also include a sibling, counselor, coach, employer, or classroom teacher. You will determine the date and time on which their conference will take place. Additionally, you will rehearse the conference in your PLP groups, showing your portfolios to one or more peers and your Portfolio Coach, all of whom will offer feedback.

While presenting the portfolio at the SLC, you will share each of the work samples you have selected for inclusion with your audience, offering insight into each piece's development, commenting on those qualities of the selection that you feel are of particular importance and explaining how it reveals progress towards, or proficiency in, a focus area from the Table of Contents. You will also reflect upon what you have learned by completing the assignment, and what you would like to learn more about.

B. The Role of the Portfolio Coach

Your Portfolio Coach will provide you with a comprehensive overview of the portfolio process and work closely with you as you develop your own academic, behavioral, personal, or social goal.

Additionally, your Portfolio Coaches will guide you as you collect samples of your work in order to trace your learning and provide evidence of it to other people. Your coach will introduce a variety of methods of collecting and organizing work, and clarify the various forms (digital, traditional, mixed media) that your portfolio might take. Providing a time and location for the SLC to take place, and PLP block time for you to practice your conference, is another responsibility of the Portfolio Coach.

During the conference, your Portfolio Coach will pose questions designed to get you talking about your learning. The goal is for you to identify challenges to learning, strategies that you used to overcome them, and how this approach might be useful to you in other areas of life. Your coach will score your work using the provided school-wide rubrics, offer comment on other focus areas using standardized templates, and discuss their feedback with you, either during the conference or in a subsequent PLP block.

C. The Role of the Parent/Invited Guest

The Parent/Invited Guest will attend the SLC and asks questions about your learning, with particular focus on challenges to learning, strategies used to overcome them, and other applications for these strategies. They will also provide general, open-ended feedback to you about each item in the portfolio and the overall quality of your presentation.

SECTION 3: PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

A. Introducing the Portfolio Process (Weeks 1-2)

In the first weeks of school, your Portfolio Coach will provide you with an overview of the Personal Learning Portfolio process, distribute grade-level Table of Contents to your group members, solicit any questions you may have about the process, and explain any key terms in the Table of Contents with which you may not be familiar.

B. Developing a Personal Goal (Weeks 2-3)

Developing your personal goals as early into the process as possible will instill in you a sense of ownership over both the portfolio you will compile and the conference you will lead. Your goal should be rooted in your interests, recurring feedback you have received in the past, aspirations you possess, or expectations you have of yourself. The goal should be challenging and meaningful, requiring a conscious strategy through which it can be achieved. You must be able to demonstrate progress towards and/or fulfillment of your goal in a manner that attendees of the Student-Led Conference will recognize. Goals should be developed using the Personal Goal Setting Form in Section 6B.

C. Collecting Student Work Samples (Weeks 3-10)

By the third week, you should have identified the system you will be using to collect and organize work (see Sec 1B; Suggested Formats). At this stage it is better to have many work samples than it is too few, so do not settle for the first assignment that aligns with a focus area on the Table of Contents. Doing your best work on all assessments will make the process of selecting final portfolio pieces that much easier.

Throughout this stage in the process, your Portfolio Coach will meet regularly with you to ensure that you are collecting work samples in all areas. You may only use work from a given subject to demonstrate your achievement in one focus area on the Table of Contents. If you think that you have no assignments to collect, or that none are relevant to the defined focus areas, ask your teachers to help identify assessments that align with the Table of Contents. Section 7C of this handbook includes a link to assessment options that might be available to you.

D. Selecting Exemplary Work (Weeks 7-12)

Working with your coach, you will determine which collected work samples will be included in your PLP. Next, you will share your finalized selections with other students in the group, for peer editing and other feedback.

SECTION 4: THE STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE

A. Preparing for the Conference (Weeks 11-14)

At least one month prior to December conferences, you will identify a parent or other guest who will attend the conference. You will compose a letter inviting this guest to the conference. Your Portfolio Coach will review and offers suggestions/edits prior to the letter being sent. [One possible letter format can be found in Section 6C of this handbook.] No more than two weeks prior to December conferences, you will provide written confirmation that your guest will attend the conference, which will last roughly 45 minutes.

During the PLP blocks that fall in these weeks, you will complete a reflection on each of the work samples to be included in your portfolio (see Section 6D: Student Reflection on Individual Work Samples). You will also rehearse presenting your portfolio to an audience of your peers and your Portfolio Coach. Members of the audience fill out the parent/invited guest feedback forms, making specific recommendations whenever possible.

B. Conducting the Conference (Weeks 14-15)

In collaboration with your Coach, schedule the fall SLC between December 5 and 16, 2016. Spring conferences will be held between May 15 and 26, 2017. Refer to Section 2 for more information about the responsibilities of each attendee at the conference.

C. Reflecting on the Conference (Weeks 15-16)

Coaches and Invited Guests can offer you verbal feedback after each PLP sample or, if the conference attendees prefer, can wait until the entire portfolio has been presented. Questions and feedback should be specific, providing an opportunity for reflection and growth.

When verbal feedback has concluded, your PLP Coach and Parent/Invited Guest will complete the Written Feedback form, which can be found in Section 6F. These forms are added to your PLP.

In the next PLP block, your Coach will work with you to revise the Personal Goal, at mid-year, or begin drafting a new personal goal, at the end of the year.

SECTION 5: MODELS & SAMPLES

Click on each heading below for a link to the samples.

[A. Sample Student Goals](#)

[B. Sample Student Reflection on Individual Work Samples](#)

[C. Sample Portfolio Written Feedback \(PLP Coach and Parent/Invited Guest\)](#)

SECTION 6: Templates and Forms

Click on any of the headings or subheadings for access to the accompanying form or document.

[A. Personal Learning Portfolio by Grade-Level: Tables of Contents](#)

<u>Grade 9</u>	<u>Grade 10</u>	<u>Grade 11</u>	<u>Grade 12</u>
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[B. Personal Goal Setting Form \(Student, Pre-SLC\)](#)

Coaches will use this form to help you develop an academic, behavioral, personal, or social goal for your PLP.

[C. Student Letter to Parent/Invited Guest](#)

This is an example of a letter that you would send to your parent or invited guest requesting that they attend your SLC. Your Portfolio Coach will work with you to personalize the letter, and keep track of confirmed dates and times on a spreadsheet or in their Google Calendars.

[D. Student Reflection on Individual Work Samples \(Pre-SLC\)](#)

Your Coach will ask you to fill out this reflection for each work sample included in their Personal Learning Portfolio. Your Coach will work with you on the development of these reflections during your PLP block.

[E. Parent/Invited Guest - Questions and Feedback \(During SLC\)](#)

This letter, which your Portfolio Coach will send to your invited guests at least one week in advance of the SLC, provides examples of questions and feedback statements a parent or invited guest can use during the conference.

[F. Portfolio Coach and Parent/Invited Guest - Written Feedback \(Post-SLC\)](#)

This form is completed by your Portfolio Coach and your Parent/Invited guest at the conclusion of the SLC. It is added to your portfolio and used to establish future goals.

[G. School-Wide Rubrics for Assessment](#)

Each grade level's Table of Contents includes a skill that your Portfolio Coach will assess using one of Housatonic's school-wide academic rubrics. Copies of the four school-wide academic rubrics can be found by following the link above.

SECTION 7: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Click on any of the headings or subheadings for to access the accompanying form, document, or article.

[A. HVRHS Schedule \(2016-17\) with PLP Groups](#)

[B. Calendar for Portfolio Develop and SLCs](#)

[C. Assessments Relevant to the Table of Contents](#)