Some thoughts on revisiting the use of portfolios.
Why would we? How should we?

Writing portfolios have been used in English classrooms for many years but the rationale for using these has not always been clearly articulated or understood. The introduction of the NZC makes it timely to reconsider both the purpose and the approach. Why?

- Literacy in writing ensures that students can participate successfully in all academic, social, and work settings. Without it young people cannot be confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners. [Vision]
- The principles of the NZC ‘put students at the centre of teaching and learning’ and a writing portfolio encourages students to achieve personal excellence [high expectations], and to reflect on their own learning [learning to learn].
- Using a writing portfolio gives students opportunities to develop the key competencies, particularly the competencies of thinking; using language symbols, and texts; managing self. Use of peer assessment could also help students to develop the competency of relating to others.
- The processes and strategies within the AOs for English at level 5 include the indicators:
  - seeks feedback and makes changes to texts to improve clarity, meaning and effect
  - is reflective about the production of own texts: monitors and self-evaluates progress, articulating learning with confidence
A writing portfolio would enable students to do this across a year.

What is a portfolio?
A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas.

Why use a portfolio?
Portfolios can be a powerful tool for encouraging students to take charge of their own learning. By requiring students to collect and reflect on examples of their own work, they allow students to assume ownership of their own learning in ways that few other instructional approaches allow. Portfolios can become a window into the students’ heads, a means for both staff and students to understand the educational process at the level of the individual learner. Portfolio assessment provides the teacher and students an opportunity to observe students in a broader context: taking risks, developing creative solutions, and learning to make judgements about their own performances.


Instruction v. Assessment
In the past portfolios were often used to showcase students’ best work and their function was primarily as a tool for summative assessment. Recently there has been a shift to use them more as an instructional tool, and it is possible to use them in both these ways.
Instructional purposes could include:

- Encouraging self-directed learning
- Enlarging the view of what is learned
- Fostering learning about learning
- Demonstrating progress toward identified outcomes
- Creating an intersection for instruction and assessment
- Providing a way of students to value themselves as learners
- Offering opportunities for peer-supported growth

http://www.pgcps.pg.k12.md.us/-ele/portfolio.html
Prince George’s County Public Schools

Consideration needs to be given to

☐ the purposes, and how these will be articulated to the students?
☐ the goals, and how students will be involved in setting these and directing their own learning?
☐ what we expect students to include? Writing done in their own time? Writing from other subjects? Drafts and revisions? Writing across a range of types and purposes?
☐ how we give students’ feedback? How will we expect to see that they have actioned this?
☐ how students will provide information that shows they have reflected on their own learning? Which learning processes do we want them to reflect on?
☐ how students select their own pieces?
☐ using the portfolio for differing purposes: e.g. formative during the year building to summative at the end of the year?
☐ how we assess/track students’ progress and growth as writers?