

GRADUATION PORTFOLIO REVIEW

A brief to the

Minister of Education

from the

British Columbia Teachers' Federation

November 2006

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ginny Sims". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G'.

President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Karakawa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K'.

Executive Director

Graduation Portfolio Review Brief 2006 British Columbia Teachers' Federation

bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Publications/Briefs_Position_papers/GradPortfolioReviewBrief.pdf

PREAMBLE

The BC Teachers' Federation is the union of professionals that represents 38,000 teachers in the public education system in British Columbia. The Federation is committed to success for every student in a strong and stable public education system.

The BCTF was pleased that the ministry recognized the problems with the graduation portfolio, made the portfolio optional for Grade 12s graduating in this school year, and initiated a review of the grad portfolio requirement. We are disappointed, however, that you did not heed our request for formal BCTF participation in the review and a partner organization advisory committee to make recommendations based on the review.

Our members are very disappointed in the undemocratic, rushed, and secretive nature of the Ministry of Education's graduation portfolio review process.

Teachers have always participated fully in ministry reviews, including the Graduation Requirements Review from November 2001 to April 2003. The advice of teachers is not always taken, but in the past, it has always been sought. This was not the case in this review.

Ministry staff informed us that this was not a "consultation" and the ministry was not seeking broad teacher input. They told us that the regional forums were limited to teachers and administrators who have been responsible for implementing the grad portfolio because they were the people who could provide detailed advice on ways to improve the portfolio. A local president who managed to get into one of these forums reported:

Because of the format of the day, I had no opportunity to speak for the ordinary teachers who will have to stand by and watch the parade. And the thousands of British Columbia students upon whom the portfolio will be inflicted have clearly not been invited.

The sessions for students were held during the day. This could have allowed for broad student input. However, instead of holding these in gymnasiums or auditoriums, and issuing open invitations to students, the organizers limited numbers (e.g., 30) and asked portfolio co-ordinators, principals, etc., not student councils, to choose the students who would attend.

The ministry held evening sessions for parents. Typically, PACs and DPACs were asked to send reps. Ministry staff told us that the evening sessions were public

meetings open to parents, students, teachers, and the public, but local organizers insisted that was not the direction they were given by ministry staff. Ministry lists sent to the BCTF were missing sessions or had incorrect locations leaving interested teachers missing opportunities for input or standing in the dark outside locked doors.

It is clear that ministry staff directly involved in the grad portfolio review are highly committed to the grad portfolio idea and will recommend the continuation of a simplified grad portfolio as a mandatory graduation requirement. Their bias is evident on the ministry's grad listserv where they have encouraged schools to continue to have students do the grad portfolio even though they are optional this year:

The ministry is encouraging all schools to continue working with Grade 12 students this year on their portfolios, including the portfolio presentation.

The ministry selected people who champion the idea of grad portfolios to lead the review sessions. One of the facilitators had this to say on the ministry's graduation listserv:

We have to focus our discussions with kids, parents, and educators on the tremendous power and potential of the portfolio, and sell it on its many merits, instead of constantly focussing on the problems.

In [our school district], we are going ahead with the portfolio as a grad requirement, and will only use the SG in exceptional circumstances.

Teachers who attended review sessions reported that the bias of the facilitators was very evident. Angry calls from students, teachers, and parents for the elimination of the grad portfolio were routinely summarized as "lack of support for the grad portfolio in its present form." This is simply patronizing.

The Federation hopes that this brief will provide a venue for the many teacher voices that were not heard in the ministry review.

RECOMMENDATION

The BCTF recommends the elimination of the graduation portfolio requirement. This is the view of a large majority of our members.

The Federation invited all secondary teachers to send input to the Federation by e-mail. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents opposed a mandatory grad portfolio. Quotes from these teachers are used throughout this brief.

In addition, the BCTF held an issue session on the grad portfolio on October 26, 2006. Participants included reps from locals, Provincial Specialist Associations (PSAs), and the Professional Issues Advisory Committee. The consensus was that the grad portfolio requirement should be eliminated.

The BCTF Representative Assembly of November 2006 voted overwhelmingly to recommend the elimination of the grad portfolio requirement in the current review.

The elimination of the grad portfolio requirement would re-open questions about the previous graduation requirements that were subsumed by the portfolio, i.e., two credits each of fine arts and applied skills, compulsory PE or physical activity, and the 30 hours of community service or work experience.

Fine arts and applied skills

The Federation recommends that the question of fine art and applied skills requirements be revisited in a broader discussion with input from students, parents, and education partner organizations. Many teachers have commented on the negative impact of the grad portfolio on these elective areas.

Physical education and physical activity

The Federation believes the question of compulsory PE courses or physical activity is dependent on the provision of adequate facilities in schools. Teachers understand the importance of physical education and activity in students' educational programs but are frustrated by the lack of facilities. Many schools do not have the facilities necessary for the existing PE classes; for example, a high school has six PE classes in each block but only five spaces to offer PE even with two classes per gym, and another crowded into the weight room, so students take every sixth class outdoors regardless of the weather. This makes no more sense than taking every sixth social studies class outside. The physical activity requirement in the portfolio simply moved the focus of responsibility for facilities and funding from the school to the family. If the government is committed to physical education and activity for students, it must provide the capital funding for facilities.

Work experience and community service

The Federation questions the need for a work experience/community service requirement. Many teachers have noted that the overwhelming majority of students already work or engage in voluntary community service so it is not necessary to make it a graduation requirement, and have teachers and students spend time documenting it.

From my experience very few students graduating have no work/volunteer experience.

Furthermore, parents and students have pointed out that making voluntary community service compulsory defeats the purpose.

SUPPORTING STATEMENTS

The BCTF submitted a brief on the graduation program proposals to the minister in December 2002, recommending against the introduction of the grad portfolio requirement.

The points made in that brief still apply:

- Teachers support portfolio assessment in various subject areas as a more authentic form of assessment.
- The areas to be assessed in the proposed grad portfolio are already assessed in existing courses.

- A cross-curricular portfolio would be an organizational nightmare within current secondary school structures.
- Based on the comments of the minister and ministry staff, teachers doubted that implementation support would be forthcoming.
- The time and resources it would take to do this would be better spent restoring programs and services lost to cutbacks in recent years.

The Federation recommends the elimination of the graduation portfolio requirement for the following reasons:

1. The grad portfolio is not meeting its original purpose.

The idea of a graduation portfolio was introduced midway through the Graduation Requirement Review at a symposium at UBC in May 2002 where the ministry presented options for discussion. One of the eight options under “Assessment” was to “Introduce a mandatory graduation portfolio where students demonstrate skills achievement related to their pathway and/or other skills deemed important for all graduates.” The option envisioned the reduction or elimination of provincial exams and the introduction of more authentic assessment methods, and a more rigorous assessment of important attributes of graduates that were not readily assessed by exams, e.g., critical thinking.

Contrary to this vision, the number of compulsory provincial exams has been increased, the drive for data for school growth plans and district accountability contracts has pushed classroom assessment backward, and assessment of the portfolio as outlined in the ministry guidelines does not require a rigorous assessment of higher-level thinking skills.

I am currently teaching Planning 10, and have also taught science, math, and ESL. It is my opinion that the grad portfolio should be eliminated from the graduation requirements. In practice, I do not feel that the portfolio is serving its intended purpose.

The graduation portfolio ballooned into a project going far beyond what it was meant to achieve.

2. The purposes of the grad portfolio are already met in other courses and programs.

The Federation believes all graduation requirements should be contained in courses offered within the school timetable. The ministry has specified the courses necessary for graduation and teachers assess, evaluate, and report on a student’s progress in relation to the learning outcomes in these courses. Presumably, the provincial curriculum for these courses includes the aspects that are necessary for BC graduates.

The attributes of the BC graduate are developed through the courses that the student takes in her or his 13 school years. The BC curriculum is a wonderful one that encompasses the intellectual, human and social, and career development of the individual. The Dogwood Certificate is the

evidence that these attributes have been acquired. The portfolio is NOT necessary.

Many teachers feel the portfolios are redundant. Portfolio aspects are already covered in existing courses.

The things that are required for the portfolio are already taught and assessed in more meaningful ways in pre-existing courses.

I believe the program should be dropped. It is redundant. The things (aspects) required of the students for portfolio are the same required in their classes...Let's focus on improving classroom instruction and classroom conditions.

The grad portfolio is a ridiculously onerous way to achieve objectives that should be dealt with in Planning 10.

I think that virtually all secondary teachers cover career opportunities, either formally or informally, with their students during whatever course they are teaching. Other aspects of the current portfolio requirements are also covered in various other courses.

Portfolio requires students to spend additional time (outside the timetable) on outcomes already covered in their classes.

The portfolio has been an expensive waste of time. All the info could be integrated into other courses. This would be cost effective and leave students with electives that have had to be cut such as art, tech, etc.

- 3. The grad portfolio has had a negative impact on other courses and programs.** Schools and districts had to implement the grad portfolio without any additional resources. Not surprisingly, many of the models that were developed had negative consequences for existing programs and services.

Advisor models and models that involve periodic grad portfolio seminars took time away from subject area classes. Pull-out models took student time away from other courses, and created organizational problems for the teachers of the classes from which the students were pulled.

I feel that a tremendous amount of instructional time has been wasted on the portfolio.

Some schools and districts tried to solve these problems and maximize support for grad portfolio development by developing a Portfolio 11–12 course. If schools offered this as an elective, which it is, then they were left with the problem of how to support students who chose not to sign up for this elective. If schools required students to sign up for this course, they were narrowing student choice and denying students an elective option. Both truly elective local portfolio courses, and ones that

had been made effectively compulsory for students had a negative impact on enrolment in other elective courses and programs in the school.

As a fine arts teacher, I have seen a negative impact on student elective choice at my school...

Some of our weaker students would be better off spending time working on course work. ...It seems that the portfolio has been implemented to ensure that students complete certain learning that has been removed as required curriculum, e.g., the fine arts requirement.

The grad portfolio program has drawn too many students out of fine arts classes and into "planning" classes. To add insult to injury, these students are handing in fine arts work ("art and design aspects") to "planning" teachers who have often no training in the arts and therefore no expertise to judge them. In this situation, once again the arts are treated as frivolous.

In my opinion the grad portfolio program needs to be eliminated entirely from the curriculum, as it takes up another valuable elective choice for students. We need to return choice to students in their own education.

I have been teaching to the portfolio criteria in my visual art courses for the past two years, helping students fulfil a wide range of criteria. The units of instruction are not any different than I have always done however the additional work load for students in order to authentically fulfil the criteria has been astronomical!

In order to provide teachers to support the grad portfolio development with students, schools had to increase class sizes.

The staffing allocated to portfolio has had an impact on class sizes that affects a large number of students as well as staff.

It is taking a ridiculous amount of allotted teacher time and money in comparison to core subjects. In my school we have six blocks of English 12 and one of Communications 12. We have eight blocks assigned to Portfolio 12. I would far prefer to see the English 12 classes halved in size.

In my opinion the portfolio plan should be scrapped. In our school we have one FTE teacher who is working solely on portfolio. This has led to larger classes throughout the school and will further drain teacher resources when the portfolios need to be evaluated.

In-service activities related to the implementation of the grad portfolio have also taken time from the implementation of curriculum, and from teachers' professional development.

As a teacher, I have spent far too many of my professional development days on portfolio. We have also used a ton of staff meeting time. I resent using so much time on this. There are so many other PD activities that would be of more use to me in my classroom.

4. Students do not find the grad portfolio meaningful and relevant.

Teachers are finding that the grad portfolio is a hard sell with students. A student's online petition opposing the grad portfolio has over 7,000 signatures despite her school's blocking of the petition web site. Students complain the portfolio is simultaneously too complex and creates meaningless busy work. Many teachers report the grad portfolio requirement is almost universally resented by their students.

In spite of the keen support for portfolio by our principal, the students that I supervise are still doubtful of its value.

The majority of students are not "buying in" to the usefulness of the process despite yeoman efforts of staff.

Several of my current, bright senior students are not interested in completing the portfolio because it seems to "talk down" to them. They find it demeaning to have to describe such basic decision-making topics.

I have not come across any student who likes it. Last year, it was sheer torture trying to get all those silly bits and pieces put together. The portfolio is a "make work" project.

As a portfolio supervisor, I must vehemently disagree with the merit of the current graduation portfolio requirement...most of the content becomes "busy" work and scrapbooking for students.

In my experience, almost every high-achieving academic student...deeply resents the portfolio.

Students often do not find the grad portfolio activities as relevant as the adults who developed the program might have hoped.

Although the "career" section seems important to the adults, I have found a lot of students pick any job, whether they are interested or suited for it, and go through the motions of completing some on-line research on the job. It seems a waste of time if it really is just a hoop they are jumping through.

The portfolio materials suggest that students will use their portfolios over time and employers and post-secondary institutions will ask to see them. This is currently not the case, and students know it.

I have taught portfolio in two provinces and have seen very little merit to either program. I am willing to bet the portfolio materials we make these kids sweat over are rarely looked at. But the worst is how the kids feel.

The students do not take it seriously because 95% of them are never going to use it.

I have spent most of my life in the private sector and I can tell you that people are not interested in a collection of tailored collectibles from a new junior employee. If someone had specific training or experience, it will show up in performance or on the résumé.

Today employers only want short résumés and they don't even look at report cards when hiring teenagers, so it is ludicrous to suggest that portfolios are a useful employment tool. Even recently employed teachers who had to do portfolios as part of their university assignments have told me that employers (school administrators) didn't even look at their portfolios.

I spoke to a young woman who completed portfolio in a pilot school. She took her portfolio with her to every post-secondary program and job interview and offered it to her interviewer. Not one person was interested in looking at it. She herself has not opened it or added to it since graduation.

5. The grad portfolio is seen as a burden by students and parents.

Although the grad portfolio is billed as a “celebration,” students and their parents see it as a burden. Secondary students and their families lead busy, active lives and the portfolio is viewed as an onerous add-on. Even parents deeply involved in their children’s education complain about this extra requirement. The Federation thinks it is a positive development that parents would resist the trend toward “hurried” children.

I have a daughter in Grade 11 who has achieved straight A's every year. Last year she scored the highest marks in the school on her government exams. She is an elite athlete, musician, has an active social life and holds down a part-time job. My point? She is not afraid of working hard. Her biggest source of stress at school is portfolio. She doesn't do anything half way and there is no time in her schedule to complete this task without dropping something.

Our students are very busy trying to keep their heads above water. They play sports, hang out with friends, have jobs, play instruments, do homework, etc. Family time has to fit in somewhere as well. Why do we want to put more on their plates?

My husband and I have spent HOURS and I really mean HOURS helping our son at home. It has been a huge burden, on top of a regular homework load, for a student who used to get learning assistance.

It is utter nonsense to me that successful, dedicated students are wasting valuable time that could be better spent on their school subjects, average students are feeling overwhelmed, and the struggling students are just giving up.

The “well-rounded” students do not need to do a portfolio to prove they are well-rounded—it is just an annoying hoop for them to jump through—while students who come from less privileged backgrounds or who face educational challenges are actually harmed by such a requirement.

In addition to the many tasks and stresses that students and families are facing today, it is an imposition of an unreasonable workload with limited value.

Students feel like they are held hostage to complete the portfolios.

It is an unnecessary extra burden on students already dealing with the demands of government exams and post-secondary entrance requirements, it is almost universally resented by all of the students I teach.

I personally know of parents who were prepared to send their Grade 12 students away to Alberta for their graduation year, so they would not have to complete the portfolio. This does not say much for the program.

6. The grad portfolio is a barrier to graduation for many students.

The Federation is concerned about the effect the grad portfolio requirement would have on graduation rates, especially for our most vulnerable students.

Teachers are very concerned the grad portfolio requirement is another barrier to graduation for students who already struggle to graduate.

I am heartbroken by the depth and scope of hopelessness I have encountered in the academically challenged when confronted by this confusing task spread over an interminable, to them, three-year time period.

Less advanced students do not fulfil most required work as it is, and to expect them to complete such a “frill” in their education is asking for failure.

The requirements are things that they already achieve, but many have difficulty organizing and keeping the materials. It turns into a situation where students who are organized pass and those who are not, fail.

It is a struggle for these students to complete their course requirements and to pass their courses. ...The pressure that these students face to “manufacture” and then document skills is unfair given their existing struggles. I work with these students and see first-hand what struggles they face.

I feel the portfolio requirement should be eliminated because vulnerable, at-risk, disadvantaged students will be less likely to graduate. It will become one more obstacle to overcome in their lives. Having “survived” the Grade 11 year last year, and almost destroying my good relationship with my daughter over the grad portfolio...The Career Cruising component was brutal. My daughter spent approximately 25 hours at the computer trying to access the information she needed to complete the assignment. Because my daughter is epileptic, she is not able to spend unlimited time in front of flickering screens. She started to have multiple seizures both at school and at home and had to be taken to emergency on some occasions.

Teachers report that they and parents, unable to justify letting these students fail to graduate, do much of the portfolio work for them.

Much of the work for filling the portfolio is done by teachers and parents.

I work with learning disabled kids and I do the assignments for them or the parents do them.

Many of the students in alternate programs are dealing with where the next meal is coming from, whether they will have a roof over their head, and other issues on the lowest level of Maslow's hierarchy. The grad portfolio requirement asks the same students to operate at the highest levels of Bloom to compile a comprehensive cross-curricular portfolio. Teachers in alternate programs report that more of their students are opting for the adult grad certificate rather than the Dogwood certificate as a result of the new grad requirements.

Portfolio represents one more hoop—one more barrier toward graduation. For our “at risk” kids it is yet one more reason not to try, when they see that no matter how hard they work there is always one more thing to do to meet someone else's idea of what they should be (what may not look like much work/burden to us adults, can be the proverbial last straw for some of the more fragile in our community—and pointless as it is doubtful that the employers many of these students will be looking to, would be even mildly interested in seeing their best math sheet).

I feel it should be eliminated because vulnerable, at-risk, disadvantaged students will be less likely to graduate.

ESL teachers have also reported the grad portfolio requirement is a barrier to graduation for ESL students.

Some schools have raised concerns that large numbers of their Aboriginal students may not complete portfolios and therefore not graduate.

Any graduation requirement is potentially a barrier to graduation. However, in the case of portfolio, the barrier seems to be organizing and documenting work in order to complete the portfolio, not the actual learning.

7. The grad portfolio has significantly increased teachers' workload.

Some of the models developed by schools and districts involved teachers "volunteering" time to support Grade 11 and 12 students in their portfolio development.

As a teacher, I deeply resent the not-so-tacit requirement for teachers to provide portfolio support/evaluation outside of class time.

Many models simply added this portfolio work to a teacher's workload without additional compensation and without other work being removed. Some examples of this approach include:

- adding this work to the duties of school counsellors.
- adding these duties to the existing duties of teacher "advisors" in an existing advisor model.
- creating new teacher advisor models that include this work, sometimes giving each teacher a number of students to support.

In other models, a teacher was assigned a number of blocks of portfolio support in lieu of teaching a subject area during those blocks. The teacher was expected to operate a pull-out program to support portfolio development. However, the number of students for whom the teacher was responsible greatly exceeded the number of students that can be assigned to a class. The problem was exacerbated by the complexity of the portfolio requirements, the lack of clarity about the requirements on the part of the students, the lack of in-service support for the teacher, and the often incomplete, changing, or unwieldy school or district mechanisms for portfolio storage. Even full-time portfolio teachers report overwhelming workload problems.

Stop pretending that teachers and administrators can schedule one more thing into each day without a problem. We can't. It's not a case of a poor attitude, or an unwillingness to try something new. We don't have time to add this to our already full-time jobs.

Right now portfolio is a "dirty word" to most students and parents. I have had to field some lengthy bridge-building phone calls just to keep parents happy.

8. Implementation was a fiasco.

It was apparent from the outset that there would be serious implementation issues with the grad portfolio.

When Minister Clark first proposed the grad portfolio in September 2002, the document she took to Cabinet promised “gradual” implementation with “significant support from the ministry.” However, she also said:

No additional staffing requirements are expected; teachers freed from supervising provincial examinations and teaching CAPP 11–12 will be able to devote time to portfolio assessment.

The BCTF brief in December 2002 addressed teacher concerns about implementation support. At the time, ministry staff were making comments to the effect that they do not know how this might be implemented but were confident districts and schools would figure it out.

Briefs from other education partner organizations also raised cautions about the implementation of the grad portfolio requirement:

BC School Superintendents’ Association: There are significant management issues in the proposed portfolios. This will be time and personnel intensive... Currently students do graduate with a Student Learning Plan, which has been developed through CAPP 11 and 12. This “portfolio” is generally not recognized and has little value in the minds of 80 percent or more of the students.

BC School Trustees Association: What is the process envisaged for assigning subject teachers to review portfolios, and how would this fit into current workloads?... Would school districts receive funding for the additional work of subject teachers and administrators resulting from implementation?

BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils: Portfolio requirements must be flexible and recognize the diversity of students... Staff resources must be available to supervise and evaluate portfolios... Portfolios must be adequately piloted to ensure that all possible issues are addressed before they become a graduation requirement.

In Fall 2003, the ministry had several schools pilot the new grad portfolio requirement in their existing CAPP 11–12 courses, i.e., as a course, in a regularly scheduled class, with a classroom teacher. The problem was, of course, these were not the conditions under which the grad portfolio was intended to be implemented in subsequent years.

Districts approached planning for implementation of the grad portfolio in a variety of ways. Some districts developed district plans and assigned district staff to support

the implementation. Other districts left the implementation planning to individual schools. In both cases, people were very frustrated with the lack of direction and support from the ministry. There was a single ministry staff person to provide implementation support and no additional funding.

In short, educational initiatives of this sort take lots of time and therefore, cost lots of money to produce. By not placing enough money into the initial installation and in-service of this program, many more human hours are subsequently being wasted at the school level in an effort to deliver a very poorly organized program.

The most difficult implementation issues were:

- supporting grad portfolio development with students in Grades 11 and 12
- assessing portfolio presentations.

There has been a sincere effort, and enormous time and resource commitments, to solving these problems but the BCTF does not believe anyone has come up with a model for supporting grad portfolio development with students in Grades 11 and 12 that meet the following four criteria:

- Meets the intents of the graduation portfolio.
- Does not have a negative impact on other courses and programs.
- Follows the letter and intent of collective agreement.
- Provides equity of opportunity for students.

The time for rectifying these serious implementation problems may have passed.

I feel that the graduation portfolio should be eliminated. Over the past two years, too much time and money have been spent, stress levels elevated, and tears shed on a glorified scrapbook.

Given the disastrous initial implementation, it will take a lot of creativity and a lot of compromise on the part of the government to earn any respect for this course.

With the amount of backlash at the moment, I don't think carrying on will be effective.

Even though there has been some considerable effort put into it by current Grade 12s and some teachers/administrations, I believe that spending good money after bad is ill-advised.

9. The equity issues are insurmountable.

The organizational issues and teacher workload issues have often overshadowed serious equity issues that arise from the grad portfolio requirement. However, the Federation believes equity is the most important factor to consider.

There have been challenges in supporting grad portfolio development with even the most advantaged students. However, it is clear the grad portfolio requirement is most doable for students who are native speakers of English, who come from stable and advantaged families, who have computers at home, whose parents are involved in their education and have the skills to assist them, who live in communities with diverse opportunities, and who do not have any personal, mental health, or learning problems.

The challenges involved in supporting the full range of students, in the full range of communities, has not been adequately addressed. Without significant attention to equity issues on the part of the ministry, the portfolios will be a better measure of socio-economic status and parental involvement than of student learning.

Portfolio is biased in favour of the students from "have" families and against the students from "have-not" families.

I also think the grad portfolio gives even more advantage to upper and upper-middle class students. They are the ones who have the time and money to take extra-curricular soccer, dance and karate. They can afford to volunteer at the local hospital. The poorer kids I've taught don't have time for such things. They are too busy working after school and taking care of families. They also don't have parents available to drive them across town. As such, they cannot fill up their portfolios and show the world how wonderfully well-rounded they are.

Some students who attend school full time and work during their time off because they have to support themselves, have no time available to complete all these requirements that seem an awful lot like busywork, rather than meaningful learning.

I find the whole concept of the portfolios to be a huge undertaking for the type of student that I teach. Many of these students have difficulty attending daily, never mind collecting and organizing a whole portfolio that requires things from their life outside of school. Many of these students are from dysfunctional families and situations that don't provide them with the resources or abilities to complete a portfolio.

The grad portfolio is one more barrier to success for at-risk students. Ghandi said, "Whenever you are in doubt, apply the following test: recall the face of the poorest and weakest person you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to them." Many teachers feel the grad portfolio requirement fails this test.

I am a Grade 11/12 alternate school teacher. I am responsible for teaching ALL of the curriculum necessary (foundation courses and electives) for a regular graduation with a Dogwood. The children I work with face a number of challenges on a daily basis, most importantly mental health issues and family dynamics. I believe that the portfolio is actually a barrier to their

successful completion... It is too contrived and structured to be a true reflection of what the youth have learned, especially the ones I teach. How do you let a panel know that you have experienced success by controlling your psychosis?

The American educator, Michael Apple, talks about a segment of the middle class who, perhaps unwittingly, invents, promotes, or supports things that advantage their children at the expense of other children. The grad portfolio requirement may well fall into this category. It may be the grad portfolio requirement has inherent equity issues that cannot be solved by teachers in schools simply by increasing support to students.

The Federation feels the issues involved in the grad portfolio requirement review are fundamental to public education. We would like to have a chance to meet with you personally to discuss our position and the concerns of our members.