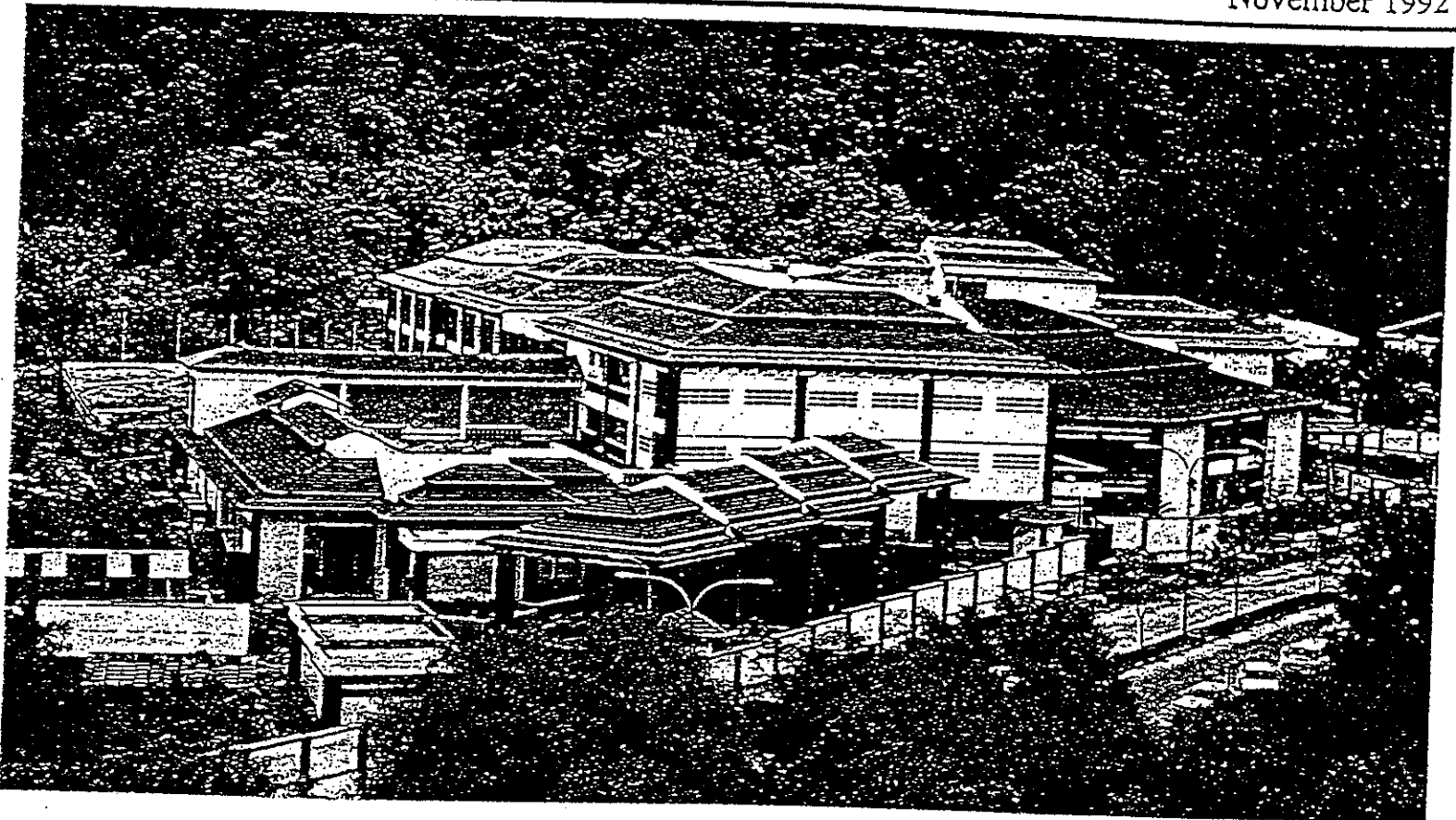


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Is a Rose Still a Rose?

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Remember the days when roses were roses, spades were spades, files were files, and portfolios were carried by art students or ministers? In those good old days I incorporated a new element and requirement in my regular high school health education class and later for my ESL health education classes. I named it "My Fantastic File."

This profound educational creation is simply a paper or plastic folder in which the students accumulate a

variety of chosen items such as: letters, photos, medals, awards, certificates, drawings, test results, report cards, souvenirs, dried flowers, leaves, and samples of hobbies. These items are chosen and included because they all make the students feel good about themselves, their accomplishments, friends, pets, memories, trips, family and country (especially for boarding students), loves and/or special events.

The objective of this project is to have something tangible on hand to remind us that we are, what I nicknamed, "the four F's": fine, fantastic, fabulous and feeling persons! The students learn to understand that sometimes when they feel sad, angry, depressed or just plain 'down', they often forget that they are

still good, intelligent, loving, loved and talented human beings. This file would always be there to remind them of all the good things about themselves. The "Fantastic File" would make them feel just that, **fantastic!**

Inclusion of these special items is only half the job, however. Each item is subsequently "tagged" with a short explanation of why it was chosen. This process forces the student to analyze precisely why they have included it and communicate this meta-cognitive awareness to the teacher. (It also helps the teacher understand the content of so many items in dozens of native languages.)

At the end of each quarter, my

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students submit this "fattened" file to me for assessment and grading on the basis of the effort and thought that was invested in the endeavor. It is, quite honestly, a most fascinating and enlightening window into my students' personalities, experiences and talents. How marvelous to see samples of their brush paintings, paper cuttings and embroideries, photos of themselves playing the drums or soccer, letters from boy/girl friends that miss them, and straight A grades on past report cards.

The fantastic file is a wonderful project for any grade level and for various content and counseling frameworks. It is especially valuable for those living overseas, whose memories of past successes are clouded by present difficulties and frustrations. It is also a wonderful project for us, teachers, who also deserve an occasional reminder of our own accomplishments! However, I have since had to rename this project because the current buzz word is 'portfolio'. How about "My Precious Portfolio"? Any other suggestions?