



Indicator: All teachers enable students to place selected work into a digital portfolio that is updated throughout the student's school experiences and provides a picture of interests, skills, competencies, and growth over time. (A10)

Explanation: A digital or electronic portfolio is a purposeful collection of work that serves as an exhibit of individual efforts, progress, and achievements. Digital portfolios not only provide a means to evaluate student work, but also the opportunity for students to build 21st century technology skills. The use of digital portfolios should include well-defined learning objectives and assessment methodologies.

Questions: What is a digital portfolio? Why are digital portfolios used? How should digital portfolios be implemented?

What is a digital portfolio?

A digital or electronic portfolio is a purposeful collection of work, captured by electronic means, that serves as an exhibit of individual efforts, progress, and achievements. Digital portfolios display an individual's growth over time through diagrams and drawings or other snapshots of processes and products. Weidner (1998) reports that not only are portfolios used as part of ongoing assessment of learner progress in one or more academic subject areas, but that integrating technology creates an authentic and public way for students to demonstrate mastery of basic media skills.

What are the advantages of digital portfolios?

Student portfolios have been used to evaluate progress of student learning for many years in traditional paper format (Papp, 2014). Digital methodologies for student portfolios offer numerous advantages over paper-based approaches (see Athanases, 1994; Buschman, 1993, Vizyak, 1994), including the following:

- High rates of active participation by students in determining the media to use to capture events, which work examples to include and how to present them for viewing;
- Enhanced media options allow students to be more creative;
- Students develop a stronger sense of responsibility for learning;
- Increased student motivation to achieve results and reach goals;
- Heightened student interest in learning;
- Easier access to materials by assessors, including those who may be remote (Newhouse, 2015)

- Students must utilize 21st century skills, including basic web design to build and maintain the digital portfolios (Cramer, 2004).

How should digital portfolios be implemented?

As with any instructional or assessment tool, the form of assessment and design of the tasks that lead to digital representations of performance are critical to the functional quality of the assessment (Pellegrino & Quellmalz, 2011). Stobart & Eggen (2012) point out that irrespective of the form of assessment, a student performance needs to be judged by assessors according to some criteria, so when implementing digital portfolios, teachers should decide in advance what it is that they wish students to demonstrate in digital portfolios. In order to make expectations clear both to students and assessors, these expectations should be codified into explicitly-defined learning objectives.

In addition, Cote & Emmett (2015) recommend that the following features are essential to good digital portfolios:

- Easily accessible to student and teacher;
- User friendly interface;
- Customization to allow for individuality of the portfolio;
- Required reflective component for the student;
- Straightforward oversight for school officials;
- Manageable privacy settings;
- Supports wide variety of multimedia files;
- Clear understanding of the purpose and connection to curriculum;
- Integration with current school technology; and
- Life-long student access.

References and resources

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