

Engaging Student Learning, Assessment, and Reflection Through ePortfolios

In the light of the Covid pandemic and the shift in teaching and learning it caused, teachers must find new ways to engage their students in effective, deeper learning and self evaluation and reflection. ePortfolios, used by many educational institutions for years now, when used effectively, have been proven to show increased levels of understanding by moving students from just observers of knowledge to active participants in their learning (Wuetherick et al. 2015). Developing these digital portfolios with students has shown to positively impact student participation and performance by guiding them to collecting and evaluating their own work, monitoring progress, and a voice in what is included in their ePortfolio (Garthwait et al., 2003). This study will analyze how implementation of ePortfolios in classrooms promotes independent learning, assess how ePortfolios impact student assessment and how they emphasize metacognition leading to higher achievement levels.

Portfolios are specifically intended to allow students autonomy in the artifacts shared, and gives students the opportunity to see growth in where they were to where they've come (Panitz, 1996). Studies have shown that allowing students to use online resources sparks innovation of how evidence of learning is shared and utilizes their digital skills to gather information through online communities, interactive peer collaboration, and an understanding of proper research (Kennedy et al., 2017). Students develop important independent skills needed for higher learning, including pace, self-assessment abilities, and acknowledge what they know and what they may still need to learn (Miller et al., 2009). EPortfolios provide students with independence in when and how they learn, and also constantly provides a means for self reflection and growth by developing a chronological pathway of their learning. Students are more likely to creatively

explore topics when allowed informal time to review and study information (Mihai, 2021).

EPortfolios are not only created by students, but they also own the writing, images, videos or other artifacts they choose to share, and drive the look, feel and experience for their audiences (Jenson, 2011). However, the student-centered model is what really directly impacts the success of a students' independence in their learning. Creating options for students to explore learning on their own, will drive them to set their own goals and creates motivation while building self discipline. One way is by using project based learning opportunities to give students the chance to choose which direction they go in their learning and allows them to make decisions that will impact how they complete their goals. The steps they take can be documented through artifacts they post to their ePortfolios which also allows them to reflect back on their choices, what they learned, could have done differently, and fosters a desire to continue their learning on what they became so invested in.

With the need for change in the educational system from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning, an ePortfolio can be a meaningful tool for teachers to assess what students have learned, where they are at in their learning path, and what knowledge and skills they still may need to access (Wickersham-Fish, 2006). Assessment of learning through the use of ePortfolios can be accessed in the showcasing of work, student reflections, and overall growth of learning over time. Using ePortfolios as an assessment tool should only be used to gain insight into how student learning is evolving, as the teacher looks at the whole, not focusing on the individual steps. Teachers must convey to their students the many benefits they will gain by maintaining an ePortfolio and not making it just another assignment they will be graded on. Instead, teachers can use them to see areas of need, provide students with constant feedback, and help steer students in the right direction, but making them feel confident in their own independence. The ePortfolios also allow for the integration of a student's academic and personal achievements and their personality, providing teachers with background knowledge essential for understanding the needs of their students (Theodosiadou et al., 2015). These types of artifacts

provide even more data for teachers to use to determine how to motivate their students in their self regulated learning and using their interests and current skills to drive lesson planning and development.

With the ability to incorporate Project Based Learning into ePortfolios, students can gain a higher level of metacognition. Imagine allowing students the opportunity to participate in a project where they are “in charge” of the end result and choices in how their conclusion is presented. Teaching them effective ways to reflect, maybe providing them with a basic prompt to help them in their review of what they worked on, will help develop their metacognition skills by building an awareness of their process and how they reached that point. These skills developed will benefit students’ work in their future assignments and projects by making the reflection process something natural. This motivates a student to reflect on their learning, steps they took to reach their end goal, and decide if they need to take further steps, ask more questions, or gain more knowledge to reach success. It fosters students to apply critical thinking skills and find a solution to problems they may encounter in their project (Lukitasari et al, 2021). In project based learning opportunities, students work towards an end product. Using ePortfolios offers the students the chance to document all aspects of their project where they can follow their learning process in getting there. This provides the student the chance to look back at what they did while making connections to real world experiences helping them formulate their final product. The self-regulated learning that ePortfolios allow, demands that students are active participants in the entire learning process, and that they plan and monitor their learning, which enhances their questioning and expression (Segaran et al., 2021). With task authenticity, students to be personally motivated to activities that they may feel connected to or can relate to real world experiences (Yang et al., 2015).

In conclusion, the use of ePortfolios in today’s classrooms is vital for students to develop essential skills needed for their future, giving them the opportunity to create a digital portfolio of their works and achievements. This practice of compiling genuine artifacts will allow students to

have an edge over their peers when it comes to landing a job or seeking other opportunities. It also gives teachers a more authentic view of their students' learning and allows them to assess progress easier and more effectively. Finally, ePortfolios enhances student metacognition and reflection by directing students to hypothesize, question, and problem solve. EPortfolios are an integral part of the future of where education is approaching and should be implemented into every grade level.

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