

Integrating the COVA Framework to Increase Student Engagement Through ePortfolios:  
An Action Research Plan

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# **Integrating the COVA Framework to Increase Student Engagement Through ePortfolios: An Action Research Plan**

My innovation plan is centered around implementing ePortfolios into the elementary classroom. Since the chaos that the Covid pandemic has caused, teachers have seen a drastic decrease in student engagement and interest in their learning. Although it was already on a downward trend, the pandemic accelerated this issue. In an attempt to get our students back on track and catch their attention and engage them, I am planning to implement ePortfolios. My action research study focuses on how we can use the COVA framework alongside ePortfolios to increase student engagement and achievement. This study will be used in conjunction with my integration of my innovation plan so that teachers understand my motivation and get a better sense of how utilizing the ePortfolios in their classes can be a changemaker to flip learning to student-centered.

## **Fundamental Research Question**

My research question is, “How does the implementation of the COVA framework impact student engagement in the elementary classroom.” So little has been written about the impact of ePortfolios in the primary setting. There are very few studies that focus on younger students and how the COVA framework can impact their learning. In an effort to contribute to the information available, this study will review how ePortfolios provide students with choice, ownership, voice, and authentic learning experiences and the results of this implementation.

## **Summary of the Literature Review**

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). The ePortfolios also allows 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. The literature reviewed directly impacts my innovation plan by supporting the effectiveness of ePortfolios in the classroom, specifically in the elementary classroom. I chose literature to review that examined student choice, ownership and voice through authentic learning opportunities including ePortfolios and Project Based Learning activities. The literature also explores what motivates and sparks creativity in students and ways to design our teaching so that it positively impacts student achievement. I chose to review student engagement specifically because I work in a very low economic district on the southwest side of San Antonio. These students are already facing many challenges and obstacles keeping them from succeeding. I want to find ways to help them become successful in the primary, foundational time of their educational journey so that they don't fall even further behind as time goes on. The literature review explores ways to increase student engagement within the elementary classroom through authentic learning opportunities such as ePortfolios.

### **Study Information**

The study will coincide with my innovation plan pilot stage where I integrate ePortfolios with fourth and fifth grades to start. Beginning with these two grade levels should provide a smooth implementation with very little bumps in the understanding of how to use various technology for creating the ePortfolios. Students at this age have usually already been exposed to and have used word processing applications, presentation apps, and other digital resources that can be used to

create learning artifacts to include in their ePortfolios. The study focused on the beginning stages of my innovation plan will also allow me to gain important information from teachers that are fairly inexperienced with ePortfolios and the COVA framework.

### **Research Design**

My research design is going to be utilizing the qualitative research method. I chose this design because I think using the qualitative research method will allow me to get the info from the source, the students. I believe that because much of getting them engaged through PBL and ePortfolios involves real world situations and experiences, using this method would be best by using observations and interviews. As I'm focusing on student engagement, I believe the data that I should collect should also include student success and learning outcomes and achievement.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Due to the age of my study participants, I plan to informally interview them through small study groups. This will give them more confidence in sharing their experiences and overall thoughts about engagement through ePortfolios. The informal interview questions (see appendix A), will provide me with a better understanding of how the students feel about this new way of learning. The questionnaire will be more of a sharing of experiences in the small study group, providing me with more honest feedback and a truer study. The interview questions will be a starting point to a fuller discussion. I will look at the responses of all participants interviewed and their views in order to determine if the innovation plan has helped increase engagement and excitement in student learning. I also plan to do random "sit-in" sessions where I watch interactions and engagement during project learning and development. This will give me a true picture of the level of engagement that is taking place. The timeline for the study is as followed:

-Preplanning will take place for 1 month, ensuring enough time for teachers to gain a good understanding of the COVA framework and using and implementing ePortfolios and project based learning opportunities in their classrooms. We will meet once a week in grade level pods and after every session, develop goals to create a successful implementation. This is where I will also present my research topic and describe what I will be doing to gather data.

-Implementation will be done over a 3 month period with this group of 4th and 5th grade students. Every week, teachers will meet to discuss successes, bumps in the road, and ideas for better integration in all subjects. This is where I will hold my focus group interviews as well as periodic evaluations during learning activity.

-Ongoing process monitoring will occur throughout the rest of the school year, after the implementation of the rest of the grade levels in my innovation plan. We will continue to meet with teachers to discuss progress, achievement and share successes and other issues as well as lead discussions with jump off topic questions (see appendix B). I would also like to create an end of year ePortfolio sharing night where families are invited and students are given the opportunity to present their ePortfolios and their learning. Student engagement with preparing for this night and including their best artifacts will give me more insight into the success of this study.

-Data Collection will be done throughout the preplanning step with information gathered from teachers, and during the implementation step by way of student focus groups.

### **Sharing and Communicating Results**

The results of this research will be shared by all stakeholders in my innovation plan. As I plan to integrate ePortfolios and PBL into grade levels 2nd-5th, I think all teachers and staff should be aware of the results. Sharing of research results will be done on a regular basis throughout the

process of implementation with weekly meetings with grade level teams. Ongoing sharing of results will help drive success in the implementation process. The results will also be informally communicated to parents during the Family ePortfolio night through the presentations of our students. The end results of their ePortfolios will provide key information showing that this new innovation plan was successful.

### **Final Reflection**

Once this study is complete, I plan to look at taking this innovation plan to the next level. I would like to have a meeting with grade level leads and teachers in grades PreK-1st to see how we could successfully implement ePortfolios and PBL into these classrooms. Although these ePortfolios would look much different than the older students, there is still much that can be done to incorporate COVA and shift their learning to student-centered. I would also like to develop a list of new resources that can provide our students with ways of sharing their learning. The innovation plan would be reassessed through campus-wide reflection meetings to develop a new 2.0 plan. I would also like to create a second study to determine if engagement increases, stays steady, or once again falls.

### **References**

Theodosiadou, D., Konstantinidis, A. (2015). Introducing e-portfolio use to primary school pupils: Response, benefits and challenges. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice*, 14, 17-38. Retrieved from <http://www.jite.org/documents/Vol14/JITEv14IIPp017-038Theodosiadou0669.pdf>

Wickersham-Fish, L., Chambers, S. (2006). Eportfolios: Using technology to enhance and assess student learning. Education.

## **Appendix A**

### **Student Study Group Interview Questions**

1. How is using ePortfolios and PBL different from the way you learned in the past?
2. Was it fun doing research on topics that you chose?
3. Is it easier working with other students on a project?
4. What kinds of topics were you able to research?
5. Did you like that you were able to choose your own topics?
6. How do you think learning about \_\_\_\_\_ will help you in the future?
7. Did this help you get better grades?
8. Does learning like this help you or make things more stressful?
9. If you were to choose this new way of learning or go back to the old way, what would you choose? Why?
10. Do you think you would want to continue to learn this way when you move on to the next grade level?

## **Appendix B**

### **Teacher Experience Questions**

1. How is using ePortfolios and PBL different from ways you have taught in the past?
2. Was it easy to get students engaged in what you wanted them to learn?
3. How did the process of implementation develop within your classroom?
4. Was it easier for you to assess authentic student learning?
5. Did students enjoy this new approach to learning?
6. If you had to choose this new way of learning or go back to the old way, what would you choose? Why?