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E-Portfolios: The EKV Experience

June Hyndman, Assistant Professor, Eastern Kentucky University

Richmond, KY

Steve Hyndman, Professor, Georgetown College

Georgetown, KY

### Abstract

One of the most popular methods of collecting student work in all disciplines is the portfolio (Banta, 2000). In a survey of schools, colleges, and departments of education, Salzman, Denner, & Harris (2002) found that 89% used some form of portfolio assessment. Portfolios are commonly used in Teacher Education Programs (Strudler & Wetzel, 2005).

As online technology has evolved, methods of collecting student work electronically have multiplied. These methods include commercial systems such as TaskStream and open source (free) systems such as Moodle (Banta, 2000). The value-added benefit of electronic portfolios is the ability to collaborate through publishing (Barrett, 2007).

This article outlines the overall mission of the EKV College of Education E-Portfolio provides a description of individual components, discusses ethical considerations, and analyzes implementation of the portfolio system in the EKV Teacher Education program.

## Introduction

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As online technology has evolved, methods of collecting student work electronically have multiplied. These methods include commercial systems such as TaskStream and open source (free) systems such as Moodle (Banta, 2000). The value-added benefit of electronic portfolios is the ability to collaborate through publishing (Barrett, 2007).

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### E-Portfolio Mission Statement

Whether electronic or paper, there are two primary types of portfolios, a presentation portfolio and an assessment portfolio. A presentation portfolio provides a vehicle through which a student can drive their own learning. It is a collection of work (artifacts) put together by the student. In addition, students creating a presentation portfolio reflect on individual artifacts, their growth over time, and on the portfolio as a whole (Barrett, 2007). A presentation portfolio is grounded within a constructivist paradigm in which the individual learner constructs meaning (Paulson & Paulson, 1994). An evaluation portfolio provides evidence of growth and achievement used to assess both students and programs (Barrett, 2007). An evaluation portfolio is grounded within a positivist paradigm assuming that “meaning is constant across users (Paulson & Paulson, 1994, p. 8).”

Before developing a portfolio system, it is important to determine what should be accomplished through the system. Creating a mission statement gives all stakeholders an opportunity to define goals and expectations.

The purpose of the EKV College of Education Portfolio is to provide a vehicle within which each candidate is encouraged to document growth, develop his/her unique capabilities, and begin the journey of lifelong reflective teaching and learning. In addition, the portfolio provides a means for institutional data collection and program evaluation in order to maintain the highest quality in educator preparation.

EKV College of Education implemented FrontPage student portfolios in 2001. In 2008, EKV began implementation of the TaskStream Portfolio System.

### E-Portfolio Design

Students at EKV have two portfolios within TaskStream. One is a presentation portfolio. The EKV TaskStream system also contains an evaluation portfolio, a different one for every major in the program.

#### *The Presentation Portfolio*

The following link is a student sample of an EKV portfolio:  
<http://www.taskstream.com/main/?/yery/JoYerysPresentationPortfolio.html>. The presentation portfolio is comprised of four areas: initial entries, Kentucky standards entries, blue ribbon entries, and personal entries.

#### *Initial Entries*

Initial entries are written in EDF 103 and EDF 203 (foundation courses) and are submitted as a student portfolio is begun in EDF 203. Initial entries include the resume, a diversity piece, the 203 mentoring project, and the philosophy of education.

### *Kentucky Teacher Standards*

The public's demand for accountability has given rise to the era of standards in education (Scherer, 2001). Developed by dozens of national and international professional groups in education, standards hold the greatest hope for significantly improving student achievement (Scherer, 2001).

The Kentucky standards section of the ECU portfolio contains two placeholders for each of ten teacher standards for students to place their best work throughout the program. This section further includes two excel spreadsheets where students record field experiences and chart Kentucky standards covered by each entry. Students retrieve demographic data for each school location where field experiences were completed using the following sites:

<http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator> and <http://www.schooldatairect.org>. In addition to maintaining field experience records for each student, data is aggregated for all education students at ECU in order to insure the program's offering of diverse field experiences.

### *Blue Ribbon Recognition*

The third section of the presentation portfolio is optional. Students completing the activities in the ECU College of Education Blue Ribbon section will present their portfolios and be recognized in a special ceremony. Activities in this section include attending meetings at state, district, and school levels, reading research-based education books, watching DVDs with an education theme, completing additional field work, attending PD sessions, and interviewing administrators, teachers, or counselors.

### *Talents and Interests*

The final section of the portfolio is “Talents and Interests.” This, too, is optional.

Students can outline unique talents that may help them stand out from others when interviewing for a position.

### *Reflection*

Reflection is an important component of the ECU Portfolio System. “Portfolios support reflection that can help students understand their own learning and provide a richer picture of student work to document growth over time.” (Barrett, 2007, p. 436)

Students follow each piece in the ECU portfolio with a reflection of 5-8 sentences.

Students are asked to review the information below before completing each reflection:

Reflection is the process of thoughtful meditation ("Thought," 2009) ("Reflection," 2009). In a moment of reflection, new situations and new experiences are judged against recalled ones and judgments are made. The intellect can mix, match, merge, sift, and sort concepts, perceptions, and experience. Self-reflection is the capacity to exercise introspection and the willingness to learn more ("Introspection," 2009). The Foundation for Critical Thinking ("Foundation for," 2009) argues that critical thinking entails self-reflection and open-mindedness, which are the keys to change, and that a rich intellectual environment is possible only with critical thinking at the foundation of the educational process ("Foundation for," 2009). With reflection, we can improve our teaching practice ([http://www.mordialloccluster.vic.edu.au/about\\_us/index.html](http://www.mordialloccluster.vic.edu.au/about_us/index.html), March 20, 2009).

The following questions or statements may help frame the reflective paragraph you will include with every portfolio entry in TaskStream. (1) What process did you use to complete the entry? (2) What did you learn by doing this entry? (3) What standard did

you meet? (4) What problems did you encounter? How did you solve those problems?  
(5) If you did this entry again, what would you do differently? (6) This is my favorite piece because... My peers like this piece because... (7) This piece was my greatest challenge because...

### *The Evaluation Portfolio*

The evaluation portfolio is organized according to transitional gates: Entry to the Program, Pre-Student Teaching, Post-Student Teaching, and Program Completion. Students post to the evaluation portfolio one piece for each education class taken. Data from evaluation portfolios are maintained in a database. Reports of data are generated to insure that NCATE standards are met and exceeded. Student portfolios are reviewed in interview sessions conducted by advisors and one additional faculty member three times during the program: at entry in the College of Education, during methods, and during student teaching. Results of all student interviews are also maintained in a database.

### Ethical Considerations

Although student TaskStream portfolios are maintained on a commercial server, each portfolio can be accessed from and is cataloged through the ECU Website. The following link is a student sample: [http://studentweb.ecu.edu/jo\\_yery/eportfolio/](http://studentweb.ecu.edu/jo_yery/eportfolio/). Through TaskStream, students have the option to publish their presentation portfolio openly on the web or to require visitors to submit a password. The publishing of portfolios to the internet requires students to be constantly aware of ethical considerations when writing about students and teachers encountered during field experiences. The following guidelines are given to students:

In an effort to create an open dialog among education candidates regarding professional practice, directions for setting up presentation portfolios call for “publishing” them to the internet.

Each of us is unique in regard to how much personal information we are comfortable posting on the internet. Even though you may find templates in our portfolio program with areas for identifiable information, always feel free to decline to post. Your grade will not be affected. Never publish your student number or social security number to the internet.

With the development of your presentation portfolio comes the responsibility to reflect on your professional work in ways that do not compromise student or teacher confidentiality in schools. You are given the opportunity within TaskStream to make your presentation portfolio accessible to everyone within the ECU community or to make your portfolio accessible by password only. This is your choice. In either case, only appropriate information should be posted. If inappropriate information is detected, it will be reviewed by appropriate ECU Portfolio Faculty. The student will be asked to remove the information. The incident may be reported to the Teacher Education Committee for disciplinary action.

Keep in mind ...The Kentucky Code of Ethics specifies that educators...  
...shall keep in confidence information about students which has been obtained in the course of professional service (or pre-service).  
...and shall keep in confidence information acquired about colleagues in the course of employment (or pre-service).

You will seek to “bring your portfolio to life” at every opportunity. One way to do this is to make a habit of carrying your camera with you to placements. Capturing images from placements can brighten your portfolio even when you do not capture student faces. Peers or teachers are more than happy to snap images of you in action. Students at a distance and the backs of student heads are fine. Identifiable student faces are not permitted. Ask teachers if you may photograph their classroom or bulletin boards, etc. or students using the guidelines above.

When writing about your experiences in field work, change student, teacher, and school information through anonymization. Anonymization ("Anonymization," 2009) is any method used to achieve anonymity, i.e. the removal of person-related information that could be used for backtracking from, say, student data to the actual student. Anonymization is a more demanding task than pseudonymization, because a combination of non-personal features can sometimes narrow the choice from among a limited number of people. Blacking out names or using pseudonyms are two methods, but make sure that clues back to the original source are not present in your writings.

### Implementation

Fullan (2001) identified three phases of change in institutions. The first is initiation or adoption and the second, implementation, represents the first two or three years of use. The third, institutionalization, refers to change that becomes an integral part of the ongoing system. Eastern Kentucky University instituted a FrontPage portfolio in 2001. In 2008, this system was replaced by TaskStream portfolios. EKU has traveled through implementation stages one and two. Institutionalization will be complete when students work steadily through all classes adding portfolio pieces. One implementation problem is that students encounter a great deal of work

beginning the portfolio in EDF 203 and completing the portfolio during methods and student teaching. Some students report little use between. Students have responded favorably to the transition from FrontPage portfolios to TaskStream Portfolios. While some students are not as comfortable as others with the computer technology component of the portfolio system, most students recognize TaskStream as a useful vehicle in collecting their best work and reflecting on the teachers they are becoming.

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