

SHEDDING LIGHT ON E-PORTFOLIOS: REFLECTION, REFRACTION AND DIFFUSION

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This session will discuss the evolution of the purpose, uses and benefits of an ePortfolio process in one teacher preparation program. While beginning with the simple idea of creating a medium for students to showcase themselves to potential employers, the ePortfolio now serves multiple roles, both planned and unforeseen. During the session, we will explain the design of our four-year, integrated ePortfolio program, present examples of student work, and share the impact of the ePortfolio on our students' learning and our curriculum. Further, we will discuss how keeping each ePortfolio personalized and flexible seems to be the best design for our students.

The recent focus of the ePortfolio program has been to increase the quality of reflection by students. Through implementing reflection strategies throughout the curriculum, the students have begun to demonstrate greater potential as reflective practitioners. Using a model for categorizing types of reflections, we have begun to teach students how to be more critical in their reflections, and have seen student reflections move away from re-telling the events of a teaching episode to demonstrating thoughtful consideration of their developing teaching persona.

Another goal of the ePortfolios is for students to understand, by archiving evidence in a thoughtful presentation, how their conceptions of teaching have changed throughout four (or more) years in the teaching preparation program. Just as in refraction, when the angle of light is changed due to entering a different medium, students using ePortfolios can see their perspective change and take new directions in their thinking as they combine and organize their artifacts. The ePortfolio is an enhancement of the music education portfolio concept due to the opportunity to create temporal events in an integrated environment. Students, through this medium, can easily compare and contrast teaching episodes and demonstrate their growth as a teacher and musician as a personal journey.

Further, the information created in ePortfolios has been disseminated in unexpected ways. A composer lists a student's unit plan as a resource on her webpage, a graduate student decides to implement a similar project with his high school Wind Ensemble, and a telephone interview is enhanced when a committee is viewing the ePortfolio while talking with the candidate. In the future, there will likely be further unpredictable "diffusion" of the ePortfolios.

Finally, the faculty members are constantly re-evaluating the role of the ePortfolio in the overall curriculum. Since technology available for collecting and displaying evidence is rapidly evolving, we have consistent opportunities to use ePortfolios in new ways, as do our students. At this time, we view the potential for our ePortfolio program as limitless.