

# Introduction to eportfolios

## The Working Portfolio and the Showcase Portfolio

Excerpt from Portfolio Guidelines:

[http://www.mcgill.ca/ost/sites/mcgill.ca.ost/files/portfolio\\_guidelines\\_revision\\_april\\_2012.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/ost/sites/mcgill.ca.ost/files/portfolio_guidelines_revision_april_2012.pdf)

A showcase professional portfolio is created for the purpose of demonstrating evidence of mastery across the 12 professional competencies as part of the process of applying for a teaching position.

The responsibility for the overall coordination, content and presentation of the showcase professional portfolio ultimately resides with the student. There is no mark attached to the final Showcase Professional Portfolio (product).

During your program, you will be creating a working portfolio that demonstrates your progress over time. It will be important for you to continue to craft your working portfolio during coursework as well as during your field placements. Ideally, your portfolio will become as much a product of your work as a process of working: continual goal-setting, planning, reflection and celebration of your growth as a practitioner. This working portfolio will likely have both a physical component and a digital one since the artifacts you are likely to produce during your teacher certification program will be both digital and physical.

If you are fortunate enough to be reading this introduction at the beginning of your program, then you have an opportunity to plan forward, save yourself time and create a richer product in the end. As you prepare for your field placements and work on assignments for your courses, consider how the work you are doing during the program is helping you to develop your [Professional Competencies](#). As you generate new artifacts such as lesson or unit plans, as you explore opportunities for inquiry, engage in research and reflect on your field placements, consider adding keywords (tags) to your work with the competencies that they address. This mindful work will save you time when you are creating your showcase eportfolio.

Your collection of thoughtfully chosen artifacts will serve as evidence to describe your mastery of all of the Professional Competencies.

The electronic nature of your portfolio and the digital artifacts you select presents you with an opportunity to demonstrate your competency in information and communications technologies:

### **Competency 8**

To integrate information and communications technologies (ICT) in the preparation and delivery of teaching/learning activities and for instructional management and professional development purposes.

#### Features

- Exercises critical judgment regarding the real benefits and limitations of ICT as teaching and learning resources, and regarding the social issues they raise.
- Assesses the instructional potential of computer applications and networking technology in relation to the development of the competencies targeted in the programs of study.
- Communicates using various multimedia resources.
- Uses ICT effectively to search for, interpret and communicate information and to solve problems.
- Uses ICT effectively to build networks that facilitate information sharing and professional development with respect to his or her own field of teaching or teaching practice.
- Helps students to familiarize themselves with ICT, to use ICT to carry out learning activities, to assess their own use of ICT, and to exercise critical judgment regarding the information they find on the Internet.

By the end of his or her initial training, the student teacher should be able to:

- Demonstrate critical judgment regarding the real benefits and limitations of ICT as teaching and learning resources;
- Demonstrate a general understanding of the possibilities offered by ICT (and the Internet in particular) for teaching and learning, and know how to integrate ICT in a functional manner into teaching/learning activities, when appropriate;
- Use ICT effectively in different aspects of his or her intellectual and professional life: communication, research, information processing, evaluation, interaction with colleagues or experts, etc.;

- Effectively transmit the ability to use ICT to his or her students in order to support the collective construction of learning in a well-structured, critical manner.

[http://www.mcgill.ca/ost/sites/mcgill.ca/ost/files/formation\\_ens\\_a.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/ost/sites/mcgill.ca/ost/files/formation_ens_a.pdf)

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Education Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS-T) are in line with Quebec's Professional Teacher Competencies and with the Quebec Education Program. They provide practicing and pre-service teachers with a useful guideline for developing the skills and knowledges they require to be successful practitioner. Increasingly, administrators are looking for teachers who can demonstrate competency in the integration of technology to support student learning, as a means of continuing their own professional growth over time and to engage their students in blended learning situations. District communication is increasingly only online and most report cards are completed using a web-based service. Communication with parents is often done using email, websites and content management systems. The artifacts and reflections you incorporate into your eportfolio should demonstrate your readiness to participate in networked learning opportunities.

**ISTE NETS-T** <http://www.iste.org/standards/nets-for-teachers>:

ISTE's NETS for Teachers (NETS•T) are the standards for evaluating the skills and knowledge educators need to teach, work, and learn in an increasingly connected global and digital society. As technology integration continues to increase in our society, it is paramount that teachers possess the skills and behaviors of digital age professionals. Moving forward, teachers must become comfortable being co-learners with their students and colleagues around the world.

- Facilitate and Inspire Student Learning and Creativity
- Design and Develop Digital Age Learning Experiences and Assessments
- Model Digital Age Work and Learning
- Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility
- Engage in Professional Growth and Leadership

In the process of creating your working portfolio, you will be engaged in a continuous cycle of action and reflection, a process that will help you to become a reflective practitioner. Your showcase eportfolio is both an academic product, demonstrating your competency as a teacher candidate in relation to the Professional Competencies as well as a way for you to demonstrate your skillset to prospective employers. [This graphic](#) by Dr. Helen Barrett helps to visualize the distinction between a working and showcase portfolio.

For your showcase eportfolio, you will be selecting your best work. Your showcase eportfolio serves as a snapshot of your learning at a moment in time rather than demonstrating growth over time. You might think of it as a “stop and share.”

Where are you now?

What do you believe and what have you learned about teaching and learning?

Where will you go from here?

Your showcase eportfolio will allow you to present a rich description of your competency to prospective employers. The process of crafting the eportfolio itself is an opportunity to synthesize your thinking during your teacher certification program.

What have been your greatest success’?

What were some of the challenges you will continue to work on?

What goals have you set for yourself?

In answering questions like these prior to interviewing for a job placement, you will be better prepared to present yourself as a focused, thoughtful educator with clear goals and beliefs. The best educators are lifelong learners. Demonstrate to your future employers that you have a plan for continuing your professional growth over time.

It may be helpful to think of the creation of your showcase eportfolio as the process of crafting a digital narrative. You will want to invite the reader in, to engage them in exploring your story and to show what you know and can do using pictures, sounds, video and hypertext. Taking ownership of your portfolio both in style and content will both increase your enjoyment of the process and allow prospective employers to see you for who you are. If we teach who we are as much as any subject, then prospective employers will want to know who you are as a person. Teaching is both a science and an art and as such there are pedagogical skills you will want to showcase as well as personal qualities such as creativity and critical thinking that should be evident in the artifacts you select. Demonstrating the qualities of a reflective practitioner in your portfolio will show your readiness to continue your professional learning after graduation.

## **Getting Started**

### **Considering Artifacts as Evidence**

The qualities and characteristics of exemplary practitioners are not easily reduced to a checklist. This is an opportunity for you to examine your unique talents and select or create

artifacts that show them off. Qualities like patience, a caring disposition or creativity are very difficult to capture, as are the habits of mind of exemplary practitioners.

Take the time to make a plan before you get in front of the technology. Creating a concept map will allow you to generate categories and organize them before you start. If you place yourself as a teacher and learner in the center of a map, what personal qualities or skills might you generate around yourself? For each of these, consider what they look like in your practice. What does a caring educator look like, sound like? Can you think of an artifact you could create that would capture that quality?

In addition to describing your personal qualities and characteristics, you should include evidence from your pedagogical practice such as inquiry projects, rubrics used in formative assessment and so on. Testimony from colleagues, supervisors, students or parents can be a powerful way to show your teacher competency. You may also want to showcase student work with permission.

Artifacts should always be accompanied by a personal reflection that tells the reader why they are important. The portfolio is both an internal process of ongoing reflection as well as a communication of that self-awareness to a wider audience. Providing the reader with a variety of products in various media will keep them engaged in your story as well as demonstrate your ICT competency.

The Ministry guidelines of teacher competency remind us that a teacher who is beginning in their profession will be expected to demonstrate mastery at a level appropriate to their experience and training. To do this, you will be selecting artifacts from your previous working portfolios as well as generating new material that reflects what you can do at this stage of your learning journey. Show prospective employers a disposition towards learning. Include your goals and your ongoing learning plan.

For each of the Professional Competencies, consider which artifacts you might include that would show you at your best. The same artifact (lesson plan, video clip) may serve as evidence for several competencies. It will be important in your reflections to describe how the artifact you've selected serves as evidence of your competency. At the end of each competency description, there is a list describing what students should know and be able to do at the end of their degree. Use these criteria as guides when selecting, reflecting on and evaluating artifacts for inclusion.

### **Technical Considerations of Artifacts**

When putting artifacts online, try to avoid sending your readers away from your portfolio to view the content. If possible, upload the file to the eportfolio service you are using and then link to it. If you can't upload it, try embedding the content you've uploaded elsewhere into your page. If you have a YouTube video for instance, select "share" and then "embed," copy the code displayed and paste it into the <html> view your portfolio. The video will then show up in your

portfolio itself. This can be done with Google Documents, Prezi presentations, Soundcloud audio files, Flickr photographs and many more media.

If you have to link to external sites, consider having the link open in a new window. This will keep your portfolio open and easier to come back to once your reader has viewed the media.

When sharing documents, print your file to pdf format. This will preserve your formatting and allow users on any platform to view your content the way you intend.

Sound files can often be “compressed” which will reduce their size. If you are sharing a voice recording, try using the .mp3 format.

## **Choosing an Eportfolio Platform**

ePEARL

<http://grover.concordia.ca/epearl/promo/en/index.php>

ePEARL is part of the Learning Tool Kit available free of charge to Quebec K-11 schools. It is available in both official languages and supported by a bilingual team. ePEARL is supported by [LEARN Quebec](#) as well as [school board RÉCIT animators](#) and ICT consultants. It has been designed and field-tested by classroom practitioners here in Quebec and the design is informed by researchers at several partner universities. Reflection prompts are built-in to this free, bilingual service. When you upload an artifact, you can choose to record your reflection in text or audio or to upload an image. Artifacts are organized according to competency in the file view making sorting efficient. Learners can invite other students or teachers to view their data or to provide feedback on their content.

Technical Notes:

When you are ready to publish your eportfolio, you have the option of downloading your portfolio to CD or USB flashdrive.

ePEARL is installed on the board or university servers, so data limits are set locally.

## **Edu-portfolio**

<http://eduportfolio.org/>

Edu-portfolio was created by Thierry Karsenti and his team at Université de Montréal. It is available for use free of charge. Edu-portfolio is available in several languages although the help files are only available in French at this time. While Edu-portfolio was created here in Quebec, it is being made available to a global audience.

Technical Notes:

You can download your Edu-portfolio to CD or USB flashdrive for offline viewing.

Users are limited to 100 MB of storage on the Edu-portfolio server.

### **Other public platforms being used to create eportfolios:**

#### **Google**

[Dr. Helen Barrett \( http://electronicportfolios.org/ \)](http://electronicportfolios.org/) has a Google website on the use of Google Apps to create ePortfolios. One distinct advantage of Google is that you can manage all of your content in one place and it can be accessed from anywhere. You own your data and it exists independently of your institutional access. While Google allows you to manage all of your content online, it does not have a keyword tagging option. A more efficient way of managing your artifacts might be to use [Evernote](#) as a repository for your raw data. This will allow you to add descriptive tags to your content. Once you have made your plan, you can select content for publication in your showcase eportfolio. At that time, you may want to use Google Sites as a publishing platform.

#### **Wordpress**

Many districts are using either self-hosted Wordpress blogs or wordpress.com to create eportfolios. Wordpress is an opensource, flexible, robust blogging platform. There are millions of users and consequently many tutorials to be found to help you get started.

Getting started with Wordpress:

<http://learn.wordpress.com/>

<http://en.support.wordpress.com/>

#### **Website creation services**

[Wix](#) and [Weebly](#) are examples of free web services that will allow you to create professional sites quickly. While they come with well-designed templates, they don't offer the user any easy way of exporting their content. That means that once you use their service, you are locked in. With the volatility of the tech industry, this is not a trivial concern. If you decide to use a web-based service, ensure that you have a backup of all your content offline.

With an eportfolio published to the web, consider creating a QR Code. Copy the web address of your portfolio and paste it into a [QR Code generator](#). The image you generate can be copied to your business card or printed C.V. Readers will be able to scan your code with their smartphone and pull up your website.

#### **Digital Tools to Capture Artifacts**

The following is a short list of some of the software and hardware that you may want to use to capture evidence of your learning. As these tools change so quickly, please consider them

as examples in use at the time of publication. Consider how you might leverage the technology you have access to in order to capture evidence of your teaching and learning using pictures, video, sound or hypertext.

The power and impact of an eportfolio is in the media. Moving your content online involves more than uploading your word processing files. You will want to leverage the digital medium and bring images, sound and hypertext to your eportfolio. Short video segments can bring readers into your practice and see you in action.

### **Hardware**

If you have access to a smartphone, iPod, tablet, laptop or desktop, you have everything you need to create your eportfolio. If you only have a print version of a document (a certificate or award you received) consider taking a photograph of it instead and upload the photo to [Dropbox](#). If you share your photographs to [Flickr](#), you can import them to your portfolio. The video quality of most devices will allow you to capture good quality short films on the go. Video editing can be carried out on the device itself prior to uploading. [Soundcloud](#) offers a free mobile app for sound recording and sharing. Files can be made public or kept private.

Most laptops and many desktops have built-in microphones. If yours doesn't come with one, you can get a functional microphone at the dollar store for less than \$5. Since you will want small files, you probably don't want a stereo recording mic.

### **Software**

If you are working from your laptop or desktop, there are powerful [opensource](#) and free applications available to you:

Evernote will allow you to collect all of your artifacts in one place. It can hold audio and image files as well as documents and allows you to tag your content with keywords to organize your artifacts:

<https://evernote.com/>

Freemind is an opensource mind mapping application:

[http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Main_Page)

Productivity

Libre Office is an opensource office suite compatible with Microsoft Word, Powerpoint or Excel formats:

<http://www.libreoffice.org/>

Images

GIMP is a very powerful photo editing application that replaces expensive programs like Adobe Photoshop:

<http://www.gimp.org/>

## Audio

Audacity is an opensource sound recording and editing software:

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/>

## Video

VLC is a video and audio player that will play back and export a wide variety of file formats:

<http://www.videolan.org/>

## **Portfolio Process**

Portfolio is an approach to reflective practice. As you work, label your work in a way that makes sense to you. Tag your artifacts with appropriate keywords as mentioned above.

## **Get feedback - Give feedback**

Use this process to connect with other educators. You'd be surprised how many teachers will guide you along the way if you reach out. Work collaboratively with your colleagues. Practice sharing your learning and interviewing each other. What if you had 15 minutes to make a good impression on a prospective employer? The more confidently you can share some important information about yourself, the better your chances to get an interview.

## **Presentation**

Create a static front page to welcome visitors to your portfolio. From here, users should be able to navigate easily to appropriate sections of your work. Include links to your digital footprint (Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Prospective employers will want to know more about you than your teaching philosophy. Do you play in a theatre group? Link to the troupe's page. Do you play in a band? Link to your Soundcloud.com site. Are you a photographer with a page on Flickr? If we teach who we are, then your professional portfolio should let others know a little about who you are as well as demonstrate your competency as a teacher-candidate and fulfill department academic requirements. If your portfolio is going to be useful to you as a marketing tool, then it should be one that continues to evolve with your practice.

Create pages that group information in categories. You may want to have a page for your philosophy of teaching for example, or a page listing awards and publications.

Don't try and pad your portfolio or inflate accomplishments. Be honest. Having a direct impact on the development of young children and working with vulnerable populations, teachers are held to a higher moral standard and as such your employer will expect that you are who you say you are.

Do include testimonies from other teachers you have worked with or principals who know your work as well as academic references.

As you add artifacts to your portfolio, it is important that you tag them. A tag is a keyword that is associated with your content and describes your artifact. Tags help users to find

associated content. You might tag your math lessons "math", "grade 3" and "addition" for instance. If you are sharing a reflection on your teaching of that lesson, consider tagging it with "reflection." You might tag your artifact with a shorthand notation to indicate which professional teaching competency it demonstrates evidence of (for example, "PC1"). This sounds straightforward but many users skip this step in the hurry of their day and find themselves sifting through entries to find evidence of their learning at the end of their degree when they could be devoting that time to marketing themselves. The more organized you are when inputting data, the easier it will be for you to put together your showcase portfolio.

### **Managing Your Identity**

A consistent identity across web platforms will help people identify you. Continue to reach out through social media, making connections with other educators who share your passions. The more control you take of your digital footprint, the more closely your digital and real life identities will align. Your eportfolio is likely only one aspect of your digital footprint. This is an opportunity for you to consider curating a personal and professional online identity and managing that content across several services and social media. Some teachers have opted to have both public and private spaces on social networks like Facebook for instance. It is important to keep in mind that *nothing* published to the internet is truly private. Also, when you "follow" someone or "like" content, you leave markers behind you that serve as signposts to those around you. You may take great care in curating your own photos, but you should also consider the photos or videos taken of you by others. Take a moment to Google yourself, to search for your name on Facebook. Pretend you are an employer or someone running a background check. What image of yourself will others find?

### **Presenting your work offline**

If you are sending your eportfolio to a school whose internet access is inconsistent, you may want to download your eportfolio to a flash drive or CD or create a short print version. You will need to be even more selective of your content and keep the document concise.

A cautionary note here as well is to remind you to keep your files small. If you are sharing a photograph taken with a modern camera, the file can be quite large. This makes high-quality printed copies but is unnecessary for online publication. A quick solution is to take a screenshot of your photograph instead of uploading the original.

### **Copyright**

If you are incorporating media content into your presentations or media productions, ensure that you have the right to use them. If you [select media](#) that is licensed [Creative Commons](#), you will be better informed about your rights. You may also want to license your content. You can use [this simple guide](#) to create a license to add to your content. This will allow other teachers to use your content while providing appropriate attribution.

If you are looking for curricular content, try searching for [Open Educational Resources](#).

## **Confidentiality and Protection of Information**

Each board has their own policies governing the use of student information. You are urged to consult with the administrator at the school you are working with as to their policy and what steps you need to take in order to use media content taken at the school. Even if the student has given permission to the school to use their photograph, you will need a separate permission form to publish content publicly.

Gathering media from your field placements for publication in your eportfolio will require that you apply for ethics approval from McGill. Refer to the Ethics Review Board here: <http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/compliance/human/reb-i-ii-iii>

## Resources

### Web-based resources

<http://www.mcgill.ca/ost/students/portfolio#portfolio>

<http://learnquebec.ca/en/content/pedagogy/portfolio/index.html>

<http://langwitches.org/blog/2010/08/04/wrapping-my-mind-around-digital-portfolios/>

### Teacher Portfolios:

<http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/pedagogy/portfolio/teacher/>

<http://eduportfolio.org/>

### Examples of student / teacher portfolios:

<https://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/timjdow/>

<http://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/aevi/>

<http://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/maribeth/>

<http://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/blosweat/>

<https://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/sbaldi/>

<http://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/sarahwr/>

<http://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/korczykp/>

<http://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/ltwchris>

<http://efolio.educ.ubc.ca/tlehuynh/>

<http://rebeccalynntaylor.wordpress.com/>

<http://hire.samwempe.com/>

<http://rempel-j.wix.com/altitude>