

## Tips for Digital Portfolios

Implementing digital portfolios requires planning and careful thinking by teachers. The following guidelines can help you make portfolios a learning experience for students.

**Teach and provide time for reflection and metacognition.** Students must be proficient at the kind of thinking that makes portfolios an effective learning strategy. Making reflection and goal-setting part of the classroom routine prepares students for the act of creating portfolios.

**Explain how the portfolios will be assessed.** Provide students with a rubric and/or a checklist to make sure they understand what you will be looking for in the portfolio. Model how to select artifacts for the portfolio and how to write a good reflection.

**Provide templates but encourage creativity.** Learning portfolios provide opportunities for students to explore digital options for sharing and thinking about their learning. Showing examples to students who have never created portfolios can alleviate student anxiety, but be careful to show a variety of formats so students are aware of the different ways they can share and think about what they have learned. Some possible tools for creating portfolios, in addition to commercial software, are:

- Blogs
- Wikis or Web sites
- Multimedia presentations
- Videos with attached files

**Set up an online space for students to save their portfolios.** Your learning management system may have a space specifically designed for the storage of student portfolios. If you don't have access to such a tool, set up a space online where students can post their portfolios securely. Since reflection needs to be honest, password protection should be enabled so students can choose who will see their work.

**Make digital tools available.** Students may need to use different types of technology to create their digital portfolios. For example, they may want to take photos of a model they created or record small-group sessions to demonstrate critical thinking or collaboration skills. Providing necessary tools along with instruction or tutorials on how to use them will expand the ways in which students think about showing what they have learned, and make the process of creating a portfolio more satisfying and meaningful.

**Schedule class time for thinking about and preparing portfolios.** Taking time at critical times through the year, such as at the end of a unit to encourage students to collect possible artifacts, can help them produce more meaningful portfolios. Over the course of a grading period, students may forget small, but significant, accomplishments, and taking a moment to archive possible portfolio components can help students include more concrete examples of their learning. When the due date for portfolio is close, allow time in class for preparation, including time and tools for getting feedback before the final portfolio is presented.

**Hold portfolio conferences.** Discussing a portfolio either through online tools or face-to-face is a critical part of the process. Conferences allow students who are better at expressing themselves orally than in writing to explain themselves, and they give teachers the opportunity to prompt students to further clarify their learning and goals.