

About Portfolios

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History

Keeping a portfolio is a very old idea. Going back centuries, artisans of any culture who kept pieces of their work to show, in effect, had the beginnings of a portfolio. Today, you would not hire an architect, a graphic designer, or a film crew without looking at some of their work to determine whether their talent, knowledge, style, product and professionalism are in keeping with your requirements. At our company, we don't ask for test scores when we hire people, but we do want to see their past work because it provides tangible evidence of their abilities and accomplishments.

In 1991, when the original Grady Profile™ electronic portfolio was published, we struggled to explain portfolios to a teacher community that had not yet met the concept in the context of education. That a computer is an ideal place to keep one meant nothing to people who thought of a “leather case” or of “stocks and bonds” when they heard portfolio.

In the intervening years, much has been added to the body of literature on portfolios including a wealth of web pages and action research reports, along with books and journal articles.



Much has been added to the literature on portfolios

Published notions about portfolios vary widely on every aspect:

- the container (from pillow cases to 3-ring binders to web sites)
- the content (from writing to all domains and disciplines)
- the format (from paper to multi-media)
- the applicability (from elementary only to secondary and now collegiate and career portfolios)
- purpose (showcase*, learning, employment)

*Will the “showcase” be for best work or most improved?

Though opinions differ, and budgets dictate some of these decisions, portfolio is no longer new vocabulary for educators. Indeed, there are now varied and contradictory dogmas on portfolios: the reasons one must keep a portfolio, the artifacts that must be in one, the formats it must take. The gurus attach many adjectives to portfolios to prescribe purpose: formative, summative, showcase, presentational, celebratory, working, growth, learning, developmental, proficiency, mastery, assessment, reflective, connected, standards-based, staff-development, horizontal, vertical, longitudinal, archival, subject area, skill area, checklist, cross-disciplinary, college admission, employment, credential, multi-media resume, and community-service. Most, if not all of these, fit into two general portfolio purposes suggested by Jim Vanides*, exhibit expertise and learning.

Toot![®] and Grady Profile[™] 3 is our “take” on portfolios; this paper, our reflection. Both have the benefit of a decade of considering portfolios from many angles. For us, it comes down to three key ideas:

- ▶ A portfolio tells one person’s story.
- ▶ A portfolio is as much a process as a product.
- ▶ A portfolio always includes reflection.

A portfolio tells one person’s story

This is why a portfolio is important and this is what keeps it current.

Your portfolio is your tangible record of accomplishment, a collection of your products, which tells who you are, and over time, becomes a record of how you came to be there. It strongly communicates what is important to you.

Your story, your portfolio, is not a fad and it cannot go out of fashion because it is always evolving with you, at your pace, in your style. In this sense, a portfolio is like skin; it always fits you and is not interchangeable with anyone else.

We can look in a closet or in a refrigerator and learn some things about a person, but they will be superficial. When we look into the portfolio, we gain insight about intellectual growth, mastery of skills and concepts, extent of knowledge, and strength of thinking skills. A single portfolio may show varied talents, struggle, wit, effort and other, perhaps heretofore hidden, qualities. Granted, a portfolio is not as good as it would be to spend time getting to know you, how you think, and what you can do. But the portfolio is a much richer representation of a person than B+ or 650 Verbal, 540 Math, or the terse prose of a curriculum vita, or a quick conversational sketch: he’s a C student; she’s a librarian; they live in the big house; he went to Yale.

A portfolio is as much a process as a product

In our experience, this is the process of a sentient being’s ongoing, adapting involvement with the world, a lifelong learning process. Teachers call it the learning cycle; writing

*Global Educators’ Network Online Seminar, *ePortfolios Workspaces*, message #102, 10 July 2002. <http://vu.cs.sfu.ca/GEN/>

Which tells more about student skills and abilities?

STANFORD
ACHIEVEMENT TEST SERIES, EIGHTH EDITION

TEACHER: _____
SCHOOL: HEN CITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT: HEN CITY SCHOOL

For all subjects and tests, a grade is a narrative and a summary of the student.
Marks in the box at the top of the report indicate:
What names appear in the lesson or

TESTS	NO. OF ITEMS	RAW SCORE	SCALED SCORE	NATL. PR-5	PRIVT. PR-5	GRADE EQUIV.	NATIONAL GRADE PERCENTILE BANDS													
							1	10	30	50	70	90	99							
Total Reading	90	85	676	91-8	86-7	9.1														
Vocabulary	40	35	641	79-7	64-6	7.2														
Reading Comp.	50	50	696	96-9	95-8	PHS														
Total Math	116	105	675	90-8	85-7	8.0														
Concept of No.	34	27	657	79-7	68-6	6.7														
Computation	44	38	672	85-7	75-6	7.9														
Applications	40	38	708	96-9	94-8	PHS														
Total Language	40	55	680	92-8	82-7	PHS														
Lang Mechanics	30	28	692	95-8	85-7	PHS														
Lang Expression	10	27	684	87-7	76-6	PHS														
Spelling	40	40	748	99-9	99-9	PHS														
Study Skills	30	25	645	78-7	68-6	7.5														
Science	50	34	662	79-7	71-6	7.3														
Social Science	50	59	647	79-7	67-6	7.3														
Listening	45	38	672	90-8	91-8	8.3														
Using Information	70	58	645	84-7	76-6	7.6														
Thinking Skills	101	78	648	82-7	72-6	7.4														
Basic Battery	587	544	679	96-9	92-8	9.8														
Complete Battery	487	419	671	95-8	84-7	8.7														

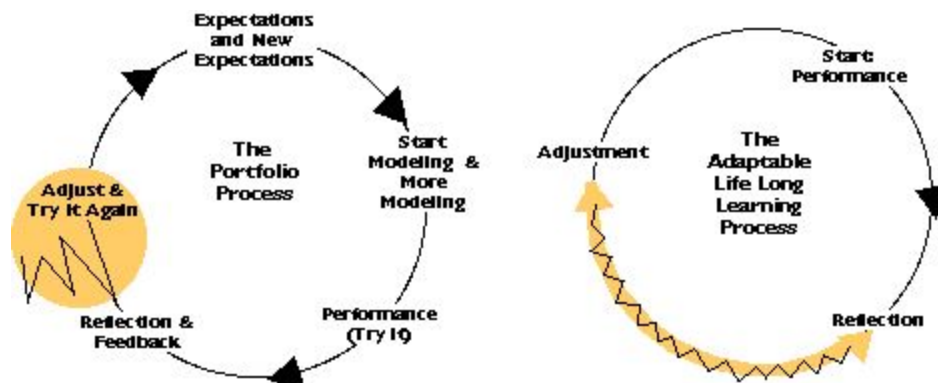


teachers call it the writing process; planners call it the planning cycle; marketers call it the product cycle; programmers call it the development cycle. Every discipline seems to have its own variation and vocabulary. It always involves performance (trying, doing), reflection (What worked well? What flopped? How will I improve next time?), and adjustment (making changes and trying again). The adjustment will range from a few tweaks, to serious revision, to starting over, all with the goal of moving closer to getting it right.

In a classroom, the portfolio process starts when the teacher and the students set learning goals and expectations. The teacher (or perhaps a student) models a new concept or procedure. Then students take a try at it. If the classroom has a portfolio culture*, not getting it right away and considering *Why*, is a strong signal that learning is happening. Students and teacher pause to reflect on performance. They think about these questions: What worked? What could be improved? How? What makes sense to try next? After considering the student critique and the teacher feedback, there might be several tries and several revisions. Eventually, new connections are made that lead to solid understandings, new skills are mastered, and bit by bit, students are able to move on to master new segments of the knowledge continuum. Then, new expectations and goals are set and the cycle repeats. The following diagram highlights the reflection/adjust/try/repeating portion of the cycle because that is so central to the process.

One could say, the process involves the courage to try and fail, the patience to reflect and the maturity to try again.

*Dennie Palmer Wolf has written that a portfolio culture is one of the hallmarks of the portfolio process. She described this culture as “a setting in which there is frequent, public discussion about what makes for good work and a clear sense that good work takes a long time to emerge.” From “Assessment As an Episode of Learning,” *Construction versus Choice in Cognitive Measurement*, edited by R.E. Bennett and W.C. Ward, L. Erlbaum Associates, 1993



Reflection and Feedback. The single most important interaction between teachers and students at any level is what academics call *formative assessment**; what we prefer to call useful feedback. More than a cheery Good job! this is feedback that offers comments about particular aspects of work, gives concrete advice or suggestions for improvement, or guides students into their own evaluation of their work. This kind of feedback happens one on one, frequently, and informally. Black and Wiliam point out that self-assessment, (i.e., reflection) is “an essential component of formative assessment.”† Students who get useful feedback from teachers learn how to reflect and they improve their understanding of lessons.

Culling. Over time, reflection will naturally result in culling. Don’t make the mistake of keeping every piece of work produced in the portfolio. An important part of the process is a periodic review of the contents to determine which pieces to remove because newer work better shows one’s abilities, skills and growth.

For personal use. The portfolio process starts with a collection of work and continues as the pieces are compared and considered against goals, previous work, colleagues’ work and professional standards. Over time, the collection is culled and new pieces are added. You can look back and see your professional growth, the evolution in your thinking, the refinement of process, the mastery of your profession.

Our point, which the literature tends to omit, is that this do-it-reflect-on-it-revise-and-try-again cycle extends well beyond the classroom and is a practical process for everyday life, as evinced by how it is incorporated into so many disciplines. Like any serious creative activity, portfolio making evolves over the life of the portfolio and perhaps beyond, in very much the way Picasso described painting:

A painting is not thought out and settled in advance. While it is being done, it changes as one’s thoughts change. And when it’s finished, it goes on changing, according to the state of mind of whoever is looking at it. – Pablo Picasso

* A seminal piece on this topic is Black and Wiliam, “Assessment and Classroom Learning” *Assessment in Education: principles, policy & practice* 5:1, March, 1998, pp7-74 Carfax Publishing Limited, UK.

† Black and Wiliam, “Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, Oct, 1998.

A portfolio always has reflective pieces

In fact, if reflection is missing, it is not a portfolio; it's something else, a collection, a scrapbook, a box of stuff; and it may be terrific stuff, but it's not a portfolio.

Reflection on performance is as important as the performance itself* because that is when understanding sharpens and deepens and becomes a part of *what you know*, which is another way of saying it becomes a part of *who you are*. Ideally, a portfolio will have reflections on individual artifacts and experiences, as well as an over-arching reflection on the portfolio as a whole.

Reflecting is usually the most vexing part of the portfolio process because many people have no idea what's expected in a reflection, nor how to go about doing it. Reflecting can be threatening: should you toot[†] your own horn? should you point out errors? How you approach reflection may depend on whether it's strictly for your own use, or whether you will be sending the portfolio out for review. For the latter, view reflection as your chance to frame the discussion and guide reviewers toward the same understanding or point of view that you have. What's obvious to you may not be to a reviewer. Use the reflection to state why the work is important, why you are proud of it. Give them the language to see it your way.

Tips for Reflecting

Think about the artifact in terms of measurables related to it and to your feelings about it. Make connections to your academic (learning) or professional (working) life. Make recommendations telling what, if anything, you would do differently next time. Write this down or talk it out[‡] making a thoughtful statement about every artifact in your portfolio. Very often, a good way to start reflecting is to describe factually the artifact or the process of creating. While this is not analytical, it often helps to kick start analytical thoughts, and is the first of the “3 Whats” (see sidebar) articulated by Van Wageningen and Hibbard[§]. A reflection need not be lengthy, but it should be honest and it should make sense to those who will peruse your portfolio.

Reflection Cycle The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction describes a “reflection cycle[¶]” that expands on the “3 Whats” with five steps:

1. Select (choose artifacts, evidence)
2. Describe (circumstances - who, what, when, where)
3. Analyze (dig deeper, Why did you do it?, Where does it fit? Was it meaningful?)
4. Appraise (How effective was it? What impact did it have?)
5. Transform (What might you change to improve it? What have you learned?).

*Jan Phillips, Director, retired, The College School, Webster Groves, MO.

[†]Sometimes you should. Aurbach & Associates has developed a personal version of Grady Profile called Toot![®] which will help you do just that.

[‡]A spoken reflection could be stored as a sound or video exhibit on the same page as the artifact.

[§]In a nut shell: WHAT? describes; SO WHAT? analyzes, WHAT NOW? recommends. From Linda Van Wageningen and K. Michael Hibbard, “Building Teacher Portfolios,” *Educational Leadership*, 55 (5) Feb 1998, p. 26.

[¶]See www.ncpublicschools.org/pbl/pblreflect.htm

The 3 Whats
Is an easily remembered framework.

- What?
- So What?
- What Now?

This framework, credited to Brown and Irby* in *The Principal Portfolio*, also is used by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and by the Education Departments of some universities†.



Measurables Measure the piece against your personal expectations and goals, and, if applicable, against formal benchmarks and standards. If there is no rubric, draft an informal one; or do a Lickert musing: on a scale of 1 to 5 where does this artifact (or an aspect of it) fall? Did this work go the way you planned? Was it as easy (or difficult) as you imagined? Were there surprises? Why? Think about the artifact or experience of producing it in the context of existing constraints (deadlines, available skills, budget, resources, pressures). What factors were (or were not) within your ability to control?

Feelings What is your preponderant feeling about the work? What contributed to this feeling? Why? What, if anything, would you do differently next time?

Connections How does this artifact relate to where you are now in school or career? Make connections between what you knew previously, what you learned through this experience, and where you are going (or would go) next. If it makes sense for your purpose, tell how the artifact demonstrates mastery of professional standards, or how it puts a theory or philosophy into practice.

Recommendations What approach would you take to a similar work in the future? Do you need a major revamping or just a little tweaking? What advice could you give to someone attempting the same thing? What would you do similarly or differently?

If you are not reflecting on the products and performances in your portfolio, you are collecting in a void. Being reflective is not easy; it's a mental exercise, and if you live in the U.S., it will be performed in a culture devoted to the aerobic, fleet and physical. More than ever, a thoughtful activity meets resistance in our nano-second culture. Reflection simply is not a hurry-up activity.

Possible model: Old In 1942, an unusual anthology, *This is My Best*‡ collected writings of living American authors (including Theodore Dreiser, John Steinbeck, Willa Cather, Langston Hughes, E.B.White . . . 93 writers in all). They were asked to choose their best creative piece and tell why. Some, disappointingly side-stepped the reflection. But many were thoughtful, such as Louis Bromfield who wrote:

*Brown, G. & Irby, B. J. (1997). *The Principal Portfolio*, Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

†E.g., The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University of Maryland, College Park.

‡*This is My Best*, edited by Whit Burnett, 1942, Dial Press, Inc. *This is My Best in the Third Quarter of the Century*, edited by Whit Burnett, 1970, Doubleday. Both are available used. Recently www.abebooks.com listed almost 300 copies, starting at \$1.00.

I have selected the passage from *The Rains Came* as it seems to represent to me as much as any other passage I have written what I seek to do in writing a novel, briefly — to deal with characters and the interplay of characters against a background or environment in which itself plays a definite part in their motivation and the moulding of their thoughts and actions. For me characters must not be imposed upon a plot but rather the story must grow out of the characters, their environment and background. I have also chosen the passage as a good representation of what I aim to achieve in style — that each sentence be clear, simply constructed however long it may be and carrying if possible a definite rhythm and sense of the imminence of background. . . . I think the passage stands up well as a unit.*

In 1970, using the format of the original anthology, editor Whit Burnett collected *This is My Best in the Third Quarter of the Century*, with pieces from 85 authors, from Edward Albee to Eudora Welty. Either volume of *This is My Best* offers a lovely piece of American literary history and strong testimony to the difficulty of reflecting about one's own work, even for Nobel and Pulitzer prize winners. If you can find a copy, either book might serve as a model for a class to compile its own anthology, and certainly it could be a springboard for a discussion about reflection.

Possible Model: New One new place to see reflection in practice may be the “deleted scenes” segments of a movie on DVD. While this is certainly not true of all movies (remember reflection is hard to do), a particularly excellent example is the discussion by Writer-Director Brad Bird on the DVD for *The Incredibles*[†]. Mr. Bird talks about scenes cut because another scene told the story more efficiently and about favorite scenes cut reluctantly because of time constraints. His thoughtful, wistful examination of creative choices is a splendid reflection after the project.

Format: While Mr. Bird does most of the talking, the reflection is presented as a conversation with a colleague, who sometimes prompts him with questions and gives a bit of verbal feedback. Tip: Whether or not you decide to include another person in your reflection, do consider running your reflection by someone else to see if you've covered all the bases, have put your artifact in context, and have been honest in your assessment.

Reflections can be presented in writing, speaking or video.

In Sum Schools at all levels, K–graduate school, can build reflection into learning time, but it has to be a conscious decision of faculty. To our delight, stories have come back to us about 6 and 7 year olds who, after learning the attributes of good reading, can play samples of their own reading from their Grady Profile portfolios and tell mom and dad exactly how they're going to read better at the next conference. And do.

Similarly, at Alverno College in Milwaukee, WI, USA, where students keep portfolios, Freshmen are videotaped making a presentation. Their grade depends — not on the presentation — but on a self-analysis of the presentation, a reflection.

*Ibid., 1942, pp 913.

[†]Disney/Pixar, *The Incredibles*, 2005 DVD, 2-Disc Collector's Edition.

What Goes into a Portfolio?

The truth is, it depends.

Spend a little time thinking about several things.

First, what do you want to convey with the portfolio?

Who is your audience and what do you want them to know and understand about you? If you are applying for a job, for certification in your profession, or fulfilling an academic requirement, the portfolio may be quite different than if you are keeping it for yourself to track your professional growth.

Second, what do you have to put into it?

Take a close look at everything you have produced in your field and in other arenas that use relevant skills, talents, and knowledge. Remember the advice given to writers, Don't tell, show. What have you produced that shows what you can do and what you know? What are you proud of? What did you really learn from? What impact did your work have on other people? Which of your products and experiences changed you? Motivated you?

- Choose artifacts to support your portfolio purpose.
- Use the reflective narrative to make sure your readers quite understand what you are showing. Prepare reflections that place the artifacts in a context and explain why you have included each item. It can be gutsy and very helpful to your purpose to include an example that was not a roaring success; use the accompanying reflective piece to explain what went wrong and how you adjusted your practice because of it. This shows you are continuing to learn and grow.

Third, how should a portfolio be organized?

Again, it depends on who you are, what you want to include, and how you want to represent yourself. There is no right or wrong way.

Look at what you want to include and see if your artifacts fall into natural groups. Here are some suggestions for Sections and Pages in Toot! or Domains and Topics in Grady Profile*:

Grady Profile™ 3 Portfolios for School & Business		Toot® A Personal Portfolio & Résumé	
Domain	Topics	Section	Pages
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Health/Medical • Demographics for Reporting 	Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Contact Info • Resume • Education
Language Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Writing • Speaking 	Work Samples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military • Teaching • Consulting
Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied Math • Algebra • Geometry • Trigonometry 	Supplemental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References • Awards/Honors • Professional • Affiliations

*Toot! is new software for individual portfolios and enriched résumés. Grady Profile v3 is the cross-platform version of Aurbach's original electronic portfolio for schools and other organizations that track work progress for many people.

Consider an Organizing Frame or Theme

Choose a frame or theme for your portfolio and place artifacts where they can demonstrate it. For example, any of the following could be a frame, though each might not work for everyone.

- **Philosophical statement** Extract key phrases for your statement of professional philosophy. A teacher might use something like Cooperative Learning, Student Choice, Prior Knowledge, Meaningful Context, Gardener's Intelligences. . .
- **Over-Arching Question** Pose a big question: How do students best learn? Why study Math (History, Science, Language...)? Where Does Technology Fit in Education?
- **Standards** Use district, state, or professional standards. If there are too many to include every standard, choose the ones that work with your artifacts.
- **Culture** Choose a well-known book or poem, painting, song, film or proverb. Rewrite, paraphrase or recast it and use your version as a frame for both illuminating your philosophy and as an organizer for your artifacts. We have heard of elementary teachers crafting a portfolio around the re-phrasing of a children's book such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See??* by Bill Martin, Jr., and Eric Carle or *In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak.
- **A Metaphor** What metaphor applies broadly to your work? Do any of these work: a village, map, building, school, solar system, planning cycle, scientific method, computer, garden, journey, parts of a book, verses of a song, chapters of a classic novel, or courses of a meal?
- **Your Discipline** What are the broad strokes of your field? A language teacher might use the strands of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. A scientist might use the steps of the scientific process.
- **Your Products** What do you make? Are there varieties or types of it? Do you use varied materials? Has your work evolved through several periods (like Picasso)? A programmer might have commercial vs. open source or inhouse programs; or Windows vs. Macintosh vs. Linux. A teacher might have lesson plans for elementary and secondary students, plus college lectures; or Language Arts vs. Science vs. Social Studies.

Fourth, what format should artifacts be in?

As you consider which of your artifacts to include, don't be hampered by format. Our portfolios accept pretty much any digital media including graphics, sounds, movies, texts, computer exhibits (which we call external files) and web pages. Grady Profile also has a reading exhibit which combines the text being read reading and the sound of the voice as it reads.

- **Movies** can be digitized with software and presented as video exhibits. Please note: Grady Profile and Toot! do not provide tools for digitizing or editing video which much be done with other software, now widely available.
- **Papers and pictures** can be scanned or photographed with a digital camera and then placed in a graphic exhibit.

- **Word processed** documents can come in as they are in a text exhibit, or as plain text or RTF (rich text format). Alternatively, save the original text as an Adobe Acrobat® PDF* file and place it in an external file exhibit which will launch Acrobat Reader® to display it.
- **Sounds** can be recorded directly into the portfolios; or, if they have been saved as sound files, they can be dragged into a sound exhibit.
- **Work in other programs** can be used exactly as it is in an external file exhibit which will launch any other program. (If you'll be distributing your digital portfolio, you'll need to be sure that your audience has that other program or that you can legally provide it to them with a reader or viewer version of the original.)
- **Web pages** can be launched from the web exhibit.

Our portfolios have the following exhibit formats for storing artifacts.

This Exhibit	Will	Comments
External File	Launch documents created in other programs	Including: Spreadsheets, slide presentations, desktop publishing, authoring stacks, word processing, draw, paint and illustration, etc.
Graphic	Display digital images through QuickTime®	Images originate in digital cameras, scanners or software. The QuickTime Player is free at www.apple.com .
Movie	Display video clips through QuickTime	Supports all movie formats that QuickTime can open. Create and/or edit your movies externally before making them an exhibit.
Reading Example Note: not available in Toot!	Record and play back oral reading	Click the button to hear; click on the white border to see the text being read. May also be used to display an image (instead of text) for extemporaneous speaking.
Sound	Record and play back sounds	Can record sound from a microphone or import sound files in a variety of formats. Be sure the sound controls for input and output are set correctly on your computer.
Text	Display styled or plain text	Type directly into the text box; or, cut and paste text from the original document; or drag and drop a plain text or RTF document.
Web	Launch existing browser with a URL	Requires a browser on your computer and sufficient memory to have both the program and browser open simultaneously.

*Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF) is a universal file format that preserves original documents in a readable, but unchangeable format. Read PDF files with a free program called Adobe Reader®, (formerly Acrobat Reader) available at www.adobe.com.

Work Backwards

To design a portfolio, start at the end. For example, a teacher will be thinking along these lines for student portfolios.

1. **What skills and knowledge will the students attain through the unit or lesson?** Those discrete skills and understandings become the items in a descriptor block or rubric which both teacher and student may evaluate. Having these spelled out at the start helps students know what's expected of them. And having students design a rubric helps to legitimize the self-assessment process for them.
2. **What product(s) will the students produce to demonstrate mastery of those skills and understandings?** Will it be a paper, a presentation, a demonstration, a collaborative project, a website, a skit, a diorama, an artwork, etc.?
3. **How will the product be placed in the portfolio?** Will it be a video of the presentation, the url to a website, the text of the paper or report? Writing could be in several different formats: styled text, plain text, presented as a pdf, in its original application (Word, Appleworks, etc., an external file). What makes sense for this situation?
4. **Additionally:** Will the reflection be written (text format) or spoken (sound or video format). Will you show the assignment? Will there be a place for feedback from teacher, peers, parents or others? Are there other things that need to be shown on the same page?

In a culture that distributes wealth and privilege so unevenly and yet still calls itself a democracy, schools have a responsibility to help kids create an autobiography of themselves that is coherent, that shows growth and that has possibility in it.

- Dennie Palmer Wolf

The answers to these questions will inform the design of your portfolio pages.

Why Bother with Portfolios?

The biggest drawback of portfolios, whether they are kept in a computer or in a cereal box, is time.

It takes time to get organized, time to gather the pieces, time to cull them, time to digitize them (cheerio to cereal boxes), and time to reflect about each artifact and about the whole collection.

If you are doing this at a school, before any of that happens, it takes time for the staff to learn the process and feel comfortable with the technology. At each step, you'll have other, more comfortable interests and duties tugging at you. Very likely you'll wrestle with whether the portfolio is correct: Is it organized sensibly? Have you omitted anything important? Have you included anything infelicitous? (Do spell check.) But these worries are similar to the ones associated with preparing one's resume. Reflecting on each piece may slow you or completely stump you and that not only eats up time, it makes you uncomfortable because you are unsure about what you are doing.

Don't omit the reflection; go back to the reflection tips above, and know that the more you practice reflecting, the easier it gets, the better it gets, and the better you get at your work.

If you are sincerely dedicated to your work, every nano-second spent on your portfolio is time well spent. Bother with portfolios because

- ▶ They tell the most important story: your story, through a chronicle your work that shows how you've grown and mastered your field.
- ▶ They provide a far richer account of accomplishment than any test score, resumé or synopsis.
- ▶ They become a gift to your future self, providing a great satisfaction when you review your portfolio, which you should do often.