

What have I learned in preparing my Assessment Portfolio?

From the student perspective I have learned a great deal from the process of preparing the assignments for this portfolio. Prior to this assignment my ability to create rubrics needed improvement. The overall assignment list was a bit daunting, but I can now congratulate myself on having made it through. Thanks to the documents in this portfolio, I am confident that my assessments will be much more palatable to my students, align with the ACTL standards, and take less time. All of which are good things.

My favorite part of creating the Assessment Portfolio was creating the new assessment standards for students. I have been having issues with my gradebook. It was overwhelming last year and unclear. Too many things were going into the gradebook and it had become meaningless. Thanks to this class, and the process of making my new assessment standards, I believe I have found a new happy medium between making sure that students are hitting their performance targets and keeping my sanity when assigning a grade to their work. Overall, the process of creating the Assessment Portfolio contents has been the most useful thing I have done in this entire masters program.

Now if what you are asking about is what have I learned about the process of using a portfolio to display my work, my answer is going to be a little less sunny. We as a cohort, began to use portfolios to display our work almost a year ago today. At the time we were given a choice between making a personal website or using Google Sites; with Google Sites being the recommended choice. At first this seemed like a daunting

task. I had, and still have, concerns with privacy. As soon as I am no longer required to keep my Google Site/Portfolio active, I likely will make the whole thing, or at least most of it, private. If you take a careful look at my site, my name does not appear on it in obvious places and, unlike my cohort members, neither do any photographs/likenesses of me.

I do not wish for my portfolio site and my name or my image to be tied together in Google searches. That is not to say that I am not proud of the work which appears on the site. I am proud of it, particularly the topics I chose to do my semester research papers on. I am happy for these papers to remain online indefinitely, albeit without my name attached to them because at the end of the day they are student work and not professional polished pieces of research. My students have the same right to privacy as I have. So the public nature of my portfolio is a double edged sword. There are the negatives that I described above but there are also positives.

The positives of having a public website serve as a repository for my work and portfolio, is that I have worked harder on my work because I care about the work I put out into the world. My cohort members also have public portfolios and I was able to consult the work found in those portfolios to ensure that I was going in the correct direction with my assignments. The ability to access my peer's work was very reassuring at times when I was still unsure of what direction to take on assignments. It also pushed me to make my portfolio one of the best looking ones of the cohort. I had a lot of fun decorating mine and my cohort members seemed not to be too concerned about this aspect of the portfolio.

From a teacher's perspective:

As a teacher of students of all ages, I feel that my younger and more motivated students would be most likely to embrace the idea of public portfolios. People under the age of 21 have grown up with the internet and feel no concern about sharing every aspect of their lives online. For the younger generation, who are just beginning to study foreign language, the serious students will likely study in more than one language program. The ability to take a portfolio of work with them from program to program will be valuable to helping to place students into appropriate classes. It will also be useful for teachers and administrators wishing to compare the effectiveness of programs and for accreditation purposes.

If I use public, website based, portfolios with future students, and I may, I will use them to build community between students, levels and classes. Portfolios in this format makes it easy to showcase the work of a high achieving student to demonstrate to a struggling student that they are not the only ones who have faced this difficulty and to show them what is possible for those who persevere. From a teacher's perspective, portfolios in this format are an almost entirely positive concept.

Did you like the platform that you created your portfolio on?

I used Google Sites. I found it easy to use and have no complaints. It integrates well with all of Google's tools. This has enabled me to embed Google Docs, Google Sheets, Google Slides and more into the website with ease. Overall, I think that Google Sites are likely the most suited platform for generic portfolios of work because they are easy to use and so many people use Google apps.

If you were to utilize this platform with your students, what suggestions, pre-teaching, and pitfalls would you point out/utilize?

If I were to use this platform with my students I would:

1. Suggest that they watch some youtube videos on how to make a Google Site before coming to class and setting up their website together.
2. Caution students about privacy and encourage them to not use their real names, images or other identifying information on the site. For assignments when they talk about themselves or their families, I would encourage them to set the privacy settings higher so that this information would not be available to the casual reader who stumbles onto the site or to provide fictional descriptions which have no basis in reality.