

bPortfolios: Blogging for Reflective Practice
Seattle Pacific University
School of Education

David Wicks
Andrew Lumpe
Henry Algera
Kris Gritter
Helen Barrett

Abstract/Summary of Effective Practice

Web 2.0 technology, such as blogging, allows for locally developed, cost effective, and holistic alternative portfolio assessment systems. By enhancing critical reflection and fostering social interaction, blogging portfolios are seen as an integral learning tool for all students enrolled in a university program.

Description of the Effective Practice

As Ellis (2001) noted, metacognition is simply thinking about thinking. Metacognition in practice can serve as, "the critical revisiting of the learning process" (Georghiades, 2004, p. 171). Critical reflection, as a form of metacognition, occurs when learners construct their own narratives based of learning experiences and professional practice. As applied to professional practices, approaches that support the examination of beliefs that emerge from these practices promote the development of more flexible and intentional approaches to effective teaching and learning (Sockman & Sharma, 2008).

Web 2.0 systems (O'Reilly, 2005) including blogs and social networks are proposed as effective online vehicles for fostering critical reflection and feedback (Godwin-Jones, 2008). These systems can act as a form of electronic portfolio (ePortfolio) which can serve the dual role of personal reflection and program evaluation (Barrett, 2009; Yang, 2009). Blog portfolios, or *bPortfolios*, are one form of electronic portfolio well suited for enhancing the professional learning of teachers (Lumpe, Wicks, & Williams 2011; Wicks, 2009; Tan, 2006). The following characteristics of bPortfolios enhance critical reflection:

1. *Social interaction* – Student share their learning reflections in an open format.
2. *Developmental* - The reverse chronological order of posts show learning growth.
3. *Organization* - Categories and tags allow students to classify their reflections.
4. *Autonomy* - Students have ownership of their personal content management system.
5. *Reflective* -Students consider which standards are being addressed and what key words best describe the post.
6. *Digital citizenship* - Students practice using social media to enhance digital reputations (Chaplin, 2011).

Barrett (2009) described how electronic portfolios can capture both the process and product of learning over time. The portfolio can be used as a workspace to document ongoing learning (process) and as a final showcase of achievements during a program (product). She proposes using blogging tools for such portfolios.

Up until 2009, Seattle Pacific University was using a commercially available electronic portfolio system. In addition to being rather costly, this system did not enhance aspects of critical reflection (see Chaplin's list above), was cumbersome, and was perceived by students and faculty as a hoop to jump through in order to graduate. A more holistic approach that fostered both the process and product side of electronic portfolios was sought. A switch to bPortfolios using the freely available *WordPress* blogging tool (www.wordpress.com) was implemented by SPU's School of Education beginning in 2009.

Programs using bPortfolios include the following: undergraduate teacher education, Masters of Arts in Teaching, Masters of Teaching Mathematics and Science, and Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction. Early during a degree or certification program, students sign up for a personal account on WordPress and set up a professional bPortfolio. The following screencasts are designed to help with bPortfolio setup: [4 Steps to Set up Your bPortfolio](#), [10 Questions about bPortfolios](#), and [Assessing bPortfolios](#).

As students matriculate through a program (courses, internships, etc.), reflective posts documenting learning are made in the portfolio. Students add *tags* of keywords from the post in order to annotate content. Self-tagging is a form of personal reflection rather than social learning (Sun & Datta, 2009). Posts are linked to standards (program, state, or national) via *categories*. Associated *artifacts* including text files, graphics, videos, or links can be tied to posts to further enhance and document growth. *Meta-reflections* serving as summative reflective posts, are written at the end of a course, internship experience, or other program activity. Peer and instructor feedback via the comments link on each blog post is used for formative assessment throughout a course. Summative (end of program) evaluation of the bPortfolio is conducted by faculty with a formal scoring system using rubrics. In one degree program, students self-assess their bPortfolios using rubrics tied to the program standards. When students graduate, the bPortfolio can continue to serve as a professional portfolio by the educator as they pursue jobs and higher level certifications (i.e., State and National Board Certification). Below are screenshots of several bPortfolios.

things. At the very least we will have our OEL groups for another 2.5 years so we can develop a protocol for looking at student learning and hopefully by the end people will crave the collaborative work we are doing and demand time for it from our union and district.

[Permalink](#) [1 Comment](#)

Coaching and Building Trust

November 15, 2009 at 11:26 pm ([Standards 9 & 7, Communication & Collaboration](#), [coaching](#), [EDU 6520](#), [johanna](#), [professional development](#), [Professional Learning Communities](#), [teacher beliefs](#), [teacher leader](#))

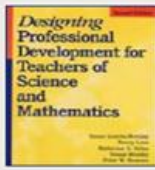
One aspect of the trust-building I have witnessed in my short career is to ensure coaching is embedded in the teacher's context and focuses on best practices in a way that is supporting and positive, not punitive. Focusing in the teaching practices and not the "shortcomings of those practices" is key (pg 169, *Professional Development*). Teachers need to feel supported and like they can talk about their experiences with new curriculum as they are. No part of the coaching process should be tied to teacher evaluation (pg 194, *Professional Development*). This doesn't mean that evaluations can't include how teachers are implementing new strategies, or even that teachers are trying new strategies.

With the use of data in a supportive atmosphere we can get teachers to admit that change needs to happen, that our teaching practice needs to be "modified, extended, or replaced" (pg 194, *Professional Development*). Teachers, especially high school teachers, need to see that working in isolation is not in the best interest of anyone.

I have just completed my first 2 hours of my last year of the NACL conference. We have spent 2.5 years discussing how to use data to drive discussion about student learning and professional development. Our Zepeda reading is very pertinent to what we are discussing this week- our professional development plan for our district for the foreseeable future. Coaching will need to be part of our plan because it is so rich and embedded in context.

We spent tonight talking about *Designing Professional Development* and how to build a sustainable program. We spent a long time in our district group discussing what sustainability means and what we want it to mean for our district science program. We do not want to become stagnant in our program or approaches. "Sustainability" means more than maintaining the status quo. Being "sustainable" means growing and changing with our students and as professionals. This is going to be a great week!

[Permalink](#) [1 Comment](#)



Student Generated Title → **Coaching and Building Trust**

Categories (typically program standards) → [Standards 9 & 7, Communication & Collaboration](#), [coaching](#), [EDU 6520](#), [johanna](#), [professional development](#), [Professional Learning Communities](#), [teacher beliefs](#), [teacher leader](#)

Tags for Individual Post → [coaching](#), [EDU 6520](#), [johanna](#), [professional development](#), [Professional Learning Communities](#), [teacher beliefs](#), [teacher leader](#)

Reflective Post for Weekly Module → *Designing Professional Development*

Optional Graphics, Links, etc. →

Comments for Peer or teacher feedback → [Permalink](#) [1 Comment](#)

Erin Blog

Standard 3 Meta-Reflection: Curriculum

May 9, 2010 at 8:31 pm ([Standard 3, Curriculum](#)) ([curriculum](#), [high standards](#), [learning](#))

Standard 3: Curriculum: Provides knowledge and skills that bring academic subjects to life and are aligned with state content standards.

My blogs and my curriculum project both show that I can design and monitor plans for students' academic success. Blogs have helped me to be reflective about my own learning and have reminded me to be purposeful about giving students time to be reflective about their learning and progress toward high standards.

My curriculum project was a detailed curriculum plan for my introduction to Psychology Unit in my AP Psychology class. This project blended my personal philosophy of curriculum and the planning and implementation of curriculum designed to improve student learning for a specific unit. I taught this unit this year and it went really well. Students performed well on their summative assessment and were very engaged in the content.

[Blog from Curriculum Class](#)

[Curriculum Project: Intro to Psych](#)

[Permalink](#) [Leave a Comment](#)

Standard 1 Meta-Reflection: Instructional Planning

May 8, 2010 at 8:12 pm ([Standard 1, Instructional Planning](#)) ([curriculum](#), [learning](#), [reflection](#))

Standard 1: Instructional planning: Designs and monitors long and short-term plans for students' academic success.

I created both of these artifacts as part of the curriculum for EDU 6524: Curriculum Design. For the curriculum design project I showed that I have the knowledge and skills to bring academic subjects to life and align them to content standards.

The blogs from this course are representative of other blogs I have written and are reflective writings in which I responded to course topics, lectures, discussions, readings, etc. The blogs allowed me to interact personally with the subject matter. Personal connections and interactions with a new subject is a great way to learn. I have taken this knowledge and used it in my classroom. Students are required to interact personally with

Pages

- [About Erin](#)

Blogroll

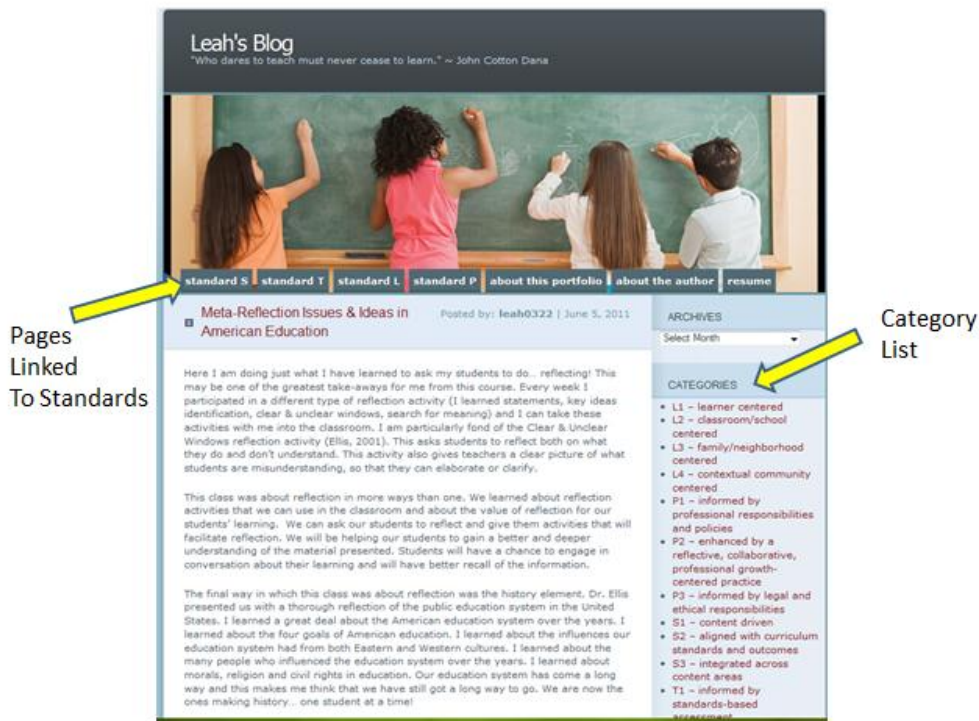
- [VocClass.com](#)
- [VocClass.org](#)

Tags

[assessment](#) [authentic](#) [learning](#) [best](#) [practices](#) [competency](#) [curriculum](#) [data](#) [driven](#) [decisions](#) [assessment](#) [data](#) [EDTC](#) [6536](#) [EDU](#) [6600](#) [effective](#) [use](#) [empower](#) [students](#) [standards](#) [learning](#) [instruction](#) [knowledge](#) [construction](#) [learning](#) [planning](#) [professional](#) [development](#) [Professional Learning](#)

Meta Reflection Posts (end of program) → **Standard 3 Meta-Reflection: Curriculum**

Tag Cloud → [assessment](#) [authentic](#) [learning](#) [best](#) [practices](#) [competency](#) [curriculum](#) [data](#) [driven](#) [decisions](#) [assessment](#) [data](#) [EDTC](#) [6536](#) [EDU](#) [6600](#) [effective](#) [use](#) [empower](#) [students](#) [standards](#) [learning](#) [instruction](#) [knowledge](#) [construction](#) [learning](#) [planning](#) [professional](#) [development](#) [Professional Learning](#)



Evidence of Effectiveness

Since 2009, 113 bPortfolios were created by Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) Master’s degree students. These students are practicing K-12 teachers who already held teacher certification. On average, C&I students made 46 blog posts including formative course reflections and summative meta-reflections. For the students completing this program in 2011 (the first group required to maintain a bPortfolio), the bPortfolio passing rates ranged from 89 – 95% for each of the 12 program standards with the average overall passing rate being 93.1%.

Since 2009, there were 236 bPortfolios created by teacher certification students from both graduate and undergraduate programs. On average, certification students made 95 blog posts including formative course reflections and summative meta-reflections. The number of reflective posts by certification students is twice the amount made by non-certification students possibly due to the high stakes nature of state standards for certification. In end of program evaluations, one student describes how the bPortfolio served as a holistic tool for documenting her growth.

“I felt that there was little duplication (of performance assessment data) as the bPortfolio is so much more comprehensible. The performance assessment material served as evidence in some of the bPortfolio sections, but the bPortfolio paints a more complete picture of our skills and experience.”

A research study on student use of bPortfolios tags was recently conducted (Lumpe, Wicks, & Williams, 2011). The most used blogs tags were compiled and it was noted that they represented the key themes from the students' degree programs. Due to the high stakes nature of state standards, certification students made almost twice as many more blog posts than students in non-certification programs. Students averaged about 3 tags per post and used about

40 unique tags. Students self-annotated reflective posts with a wide variety of tags. The tags co-occurred and clustered together to annotate similar blog content. Tag phrase use can significantly predict group membership (certification vs. non-certification).

How does this practice relate to pillars?

There is a strong interrelationship among the pillars of learning effectiveness (above), access, scale and student satisfaction.

Access. Since basic WordPress accounts are free of charge, all students are able to create and publish to their bPortfolio while enrolled in the School of Education. Students document their progress through a degree program by using their bPortfolio in numerous on-campus and online courses and/or during their field experiences. In this way, the bPortfolio is an integral learning tool for all students while enrolled. One particularly beneficial aspect is that students may then continue to maintain their site upon completion of the program, as their individual accounts are not registered on a university server. In an online course discussion, one student describes why he likes having his work stored in the cloud (WordPress.com).

"I am glad that my work is in a central location and that I can build on it. I think I have old papers from my undergrad work, but they are stored away. Now, if I need to reference materials I used in this course, I can go right to my bPortfolio."

Scale. The university can focus its time and efforts on improving instruction and student support for the bPortfolio, rather than allocate funds and personnel to web-hosting, software upgrades, and software support, etc. in the bPortfolio project. In this manner, the bPortfolio is a highly cost effective approach to supporting reflective practice.

Student Satisfaction. Faculty have been able to use student survey feedback to improve the bPortfolio experience for their students. As a result, student satisfaction in using bPortfolio continues to improve. Students in one graduate teacher certification program were asked to rate their overall satisfaction in using the bPortfolio on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied) upon completion of their one-year program.

Results indicate increased student satisfaction between the initial year of implementation (2009-2010; N=43) and the second year (2010-2011; N=40) on the following five aspects:

Aspect:	2009-2010	2010-2011
The usefulness of the bPortfolio site as a resource for feedback and professional growth.	4.372	5.205
The ease of maintaining a bPortfolio site on a regular basis.	4.395	5.526
The educational value of a regular blogging requirement in the certification program.	4.326	5.211
Using the bPortfolio as a communication tool with instructors, coordinators and fellow students.	3.860	4.725
The overall bPortfolio preparation and assessment process (e.g. drafting a meta-reflection, gathering evidence, receiving scores and feedback, etc.)	4.093	4.718

In an online course discussion, two students share their satisfaction with creating a bPortfolio. They also share how it helps them assess their learning and produce higher quality of work.

"I have really enjoyed posting each week on our bPortfolios. I have to say I thought I would hate it because this is my first ever experience in blogging of any kind. Having this bPortfolio has been a great way to share what I am learning and help me assess my own learning. Writing the blog each week has helped me get excited about what I am learning and is a great way to practice my summarizing skills. I hope to expand my use of the bPortfolio throughout these next two years at SPU. I vote yes for e-portfolios and classroom blogs to make learning more holistic and collaborative."

"We kept seeing over and over in our materials through out the course that students create better work when they know the public can see it. I agree that the use of bPortfolios, blogs, and other public tools motivate students to produce a more polished product. I also love that so many tools reference students assisting one another and contributing ideas. Education shouldn't be just a one directional practice with the teacher educating the students. Our educational institutions should allow learning from all direction."

Equipment necessary to implement Effective Practice

Students only need access to a web browser and a freely available WordPress.com account. Faculty only need a browser to access student bPortfolios.

Estimate the probable costs associated with this practice

Since WordPress accounts are free of charge, there are few costs involved. Students are charged a onetime \$60 institutional fee to help cover the costs of ongoing training, support and portfolio assessment.

Supporting Documents

The following screencasts were developed and recorded by the university's Instructional Technology Services department as training tools for students and faculty:

[4 Steps to Set up Your bPortfolio](#), [10 Questions about bPortfolios](#), [Assessing bPortfolios](#).

Faculty in the teacher certification programs developed their own blog to serve as a template for student organization of their own bPortfolios – <http://spurescert.wordpress.com> (2009-2011) and <http://sputeacher.wordpress.com> (2011-2012).

Faculty in the Curriculum and Instruction program developed a sample blog as a training tool for students as they set up their bPortfolios - <http://spubportfolio.wordpress.com>.

A brief executive summary of the bPortfolio process was developed by faculty and is used as a training document for both faculty and students -

<http://www.spu.edu/depts/soe/documents/bPortfolio-Executive-Summary.pdf>.

A description, a scoring rubric used by faculty for evaluation, and a timeline of implementation of bPortfolios in teacher certification can be found on pages 79-83 of the Residency Teacher Certification Handbook - <http://www.spu.edu/depts/soe/documents/2011-12ResCertHandbook.pdf>.

Useful Links

Examples of Student bPortfolios

- <http://hamiltonlauren.wordpress.com/> (Masters of Arts in Teaching student)
- <http://susancarbonsbportfolio.wordpress.com/> (Curriculum and Instruction Master's student)
- <http://rollis1.wordpress.com> (undergraduate teacher education student)

References

Barrett, H. (2009, August 23). *Balancing the Two Faces of E-Portfolios*. Retrieved from <http://electronicportfolios.org/balance/Balancing2.htm>

Chaplin, H. (2011, November 23). *The future of reading and writing is collaborative*. Retrieved from <http://spotlight.macfound.org/featured-stories/entry/the-future-of-reading-and-writing-is-collaborative/>

Ellis, A. K. (2001). *Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Together: The Reflective Classroom*. Poughkeepsie, NY: Eye on Education.

Georghiades, P. (2004). From the general to the situated: Three decades of metacognition. *International Journal of Science Education*, 26(3), 365-383.

Godwin-Jones, R. (2003). Blogs and wikis: Environments for on-line collaboration. *Language Learning & Technology*, 7(2), 12-16.

Lumpe, A.T., Wicks, D., & Williams, T. (July, 2011). *bPortfolios: Blog Portfolios and Self-Tagging as Reflective Practice for Teachers*. A paper presented at the Sloan-C International Symposium on Emerging Technology Applications for Online Learning, San Jose, California.

O'Reilly, T. (2005, September 9). What is web 2.0 - Design patterns and business models for the next generation of software. *O'Reilly Media*, Retrieved from <http://oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>

Sockman, B. R., & Sharma, P. (2008). Struggling toward a transformative model of instruction: It's not so easy! *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(4), 1070-1082.

Sun, A., & Datta, A. (2009). *On Stability, Clarity, and Co-occurrence of Self-Tagging*. A paper presented at the 2nd ACM International Conference on Web Search and Data Mining, Barcelona, Spain.

Tan, Ashley (2006). *Does Scaffolded Blogging Promote Preservice Teacher Reflection? Examining the Relationships Between Learning Tool and Scaffolding in a Blended Learning Environment* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Indiana University, Bloomington , IN.

Wicks, D. (2009, April 17). Coining a new term - bPortfolios. *David Wicks: Educational Technology*. Retrieved 28 September, 2011 from <https://dwicksspu.wordpress.com/2009/04/17/coining-a-new-term-bportfolios/>

Yang, S.-H. (2009). Using Blogs to Enhance Critical Reflection and Community of Practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12 (2), 11–21.