

## A professional portfolio provides an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of knowledge, skills and understandings necessary for classroom success.

### WHY DO I NEED A DIGITAL PORTFOLIO?

A recent decision by the Utah State Board of Education to require all state schools and colleges of education to adhere to national standards and to require all beginning teachers to produce a professional portfolio during their first year of teaching provides ample evidence of how imperative it is that, as a prospective teacher, you are able to demonstrate your teaching competence to others in concrete ways.

In addition, many teacher education programs, including our program at Southern Utah University, are utilizing measurements of performance as a strategy for evaluating preservice teachers' progress in their professional training. This is entirely appropriate, since you will be evaluated and held accountable for utilizing exemplary teaching practices throughout your professional career. As an emerging professional, you deserve an evaluation based upon a full assessment of your knowledge, skills and dispositions.

Research on teacher effectiveness suggests that excellent teachers learn from their experiences and constantly seek to refine their professional practice. They remain current about educational research and grow professionally through reading professional journals and books, attending workshops, and interacting with colleagues in order to benefit from the experience of others. Master teachers continually try out new strategies and techniques in their classrooms, reflect on their successes and failures, and then adjust their professional practices accordingly. They often keep reflective journals and carry out formal action research projects to assist them in this process.

When employed as a tool for reflective practice, a professional portfolio can enable you to make sense out of a myriad of experiences and bring into focus a clear picture of yourself as a growing, changing professional. Properly used, it can also become a highly meaningful and effective way to demonstrate to others the skills and knowledge you have gained in the complex art and science of teaching.

### WHAT IS A DIGITAL PORTFOLIO?

A digital portfolio is more than an electronic collection of course projects, assignments, and teaching memorabilia. A thoughtfully developed portfolio is an organized, standards-driven documentation of your professional development and competency in teaching. The digital documents, also known as artifacts, included in your portfolio provide tangible evidence of the wide range of knowledge, dispositions, and skills that you possess as a growing professional.



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In documenting your growth toward competency you will actually be developing two separate portfolios: a working portfolio and a presentation portfolio. A working portfolio includes a general collection of products and work samples created as part of your coursework and other professional activities such as classroom observation and student teaching. The primary purpose of the working portfolio is to serve as a framework for self-assessment and goal setting. Later, you will develop a presentation portfolio by selecting samples from your working portfolio which best reflect specific dimensions of your competence as a professional educator. An important purpose of the presentation portfolio is to provide for yourself and others, evidence of teaching competency related to unit, state and national standards.

### What is a Working Portfolio?

Since the working portfolio is a comprehensive collection of samples of your work, it will always be much larger and more complete than your presentation portfolio. Unlike the presentation portfolio, it contains unabridged versions of all of the documents you have selected to represent your professional growth. It might, for example, contain entire reflective journals from observation experiences or complete lessons, units and teaching materials produced in Block courses, and an assortment of videos of your student teaching.

The pool of digital documents included in working

portfolios require significant storage space and may be archived on hard disk drives or multiple CD-ROM or DVD disks.

### What is a Presentation Portfolio?

When selecting documents to include in your presentation portfolio, bear in mind that less is more. Your presentation portfolio will need to be selective and streamlined because your professors, supervisors, cooperating teachers and others (including potential employers) who need to assess your growing competence are unlikely to have the time needed to review all the documents in your working portfolio. For example, since it would be impractical to take to an interview that model of the solar system you constructed for a science methods course, you might include a digital photograph of it in the teacher-made materials section of your portfolio. A potential employer probably would not be interested in reviewing several hours worth of videos of your teaching but might have time to watch a well-edited, five minute video documenting your ability to engage your students in a thought provoking discussion. Similarly, representative sample pages from a large unit might replace the entire project. All of the documents you choose to include in your presentation portfolio should be preceded by a rationale statement explaining why it was selected. Discussing the importance or relevance of the document enables the reviewer to understand the context of your work and what the document says about your professional competence.

You will create your presentation portfolio using e-portfolio™ software from Chalk & Wire, a Canadian based software development company. E-portfolio™ enables you to simply upload files from your working portfolio into a template which can be customized to suit your needs. Ideally, the presentation portfolio you create using e-portfolio™ should fit nicely on a single CD-ROM disk.

### HOW DO I ORGANIZE MY PORTFOLIO?

One thing that working and presentation portfolios have in common is their need for a well established organizational system. One way to achieve this is to organize your portfolio around a set of standards-based goals that you are trying to achieve. This is especially appropriate since a central purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate your success in developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions defined by professional teaching standards.

Developing a portfolio around principles established by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) will provide an organizational focus

Your Professional

Portfolio

and how to use it as a tool for reflection and professional growth



and do much to facilitate your growth and achievement of the Professional Education Unit outcomes which are closely correlated to these standards. INTASC standards were chosen by the Unit because of their general relevance for teachers of all disciplines and grade levels and because they are the standards upon which state licensure is based.

You will find that the ten INTASC standards which provide the organizational structure for your presentation portfolio have already been incorporated into the e-portfolio™ template. To create a presentation portfolio you will simply upload artifacts from your working portfolio and type supporting information into spaces provided in the template to document mastery of each of the standards. Specific instructions for storing your artifacts and using the template will be provided when you establish your account on the Unit's Digital Portfolio Web server.

WHAT EVIDENCE SHOULD I INCLUDE IN MY PORTFOLIO?

For every standard, you will include artifacts that demonstrate you have met this principle. An artifact is tangible evidence of knowledge that is gained, skills that are mastered, values that are clarified, or dispositions and attitudes that are characteristic of you. Artifacts cannot conclusively prove the attainment of knowledge, skills, or dispositions, but they provide an indication of achieved competence. For example, lesson and unit plans are pieces of evidence that might provide a strong indication of your ability to plan curriculum or use a variety of teaching strategies. A video of your teaching might be a convincing indicator of your ability to manage and motivate a group of students. The same artifact may document more than one standard.

At first, many artifacts will be collected. Later, artifacts will be selectively placed within each of the standards. Those artifacts that represent your growth and very best professional work should be included as evidence in your presentation portfolio. Ask yourself: Would I be proud to have my future employer and peer group see this? Is this an example of what my future professional work might look like? Does this represent what I stand for as a professional educator? If not, what can I do to revise or rearrange it so that it represents my best efforts?

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE FOR MY PORTFOLIO?

Information contained in the portfolio will be of interest to individuals who will be assessing your performance and accountability. While a candidate, your portfolio will be reviewed by your university faculty and advisors. Moreover, your portfolio will be an excellent way for you to introduce yourself to cooperating teachers and administrators during field experiences and student teaching. During job interviews, your portfolio is likely to be reviewed by superintendents, principals, teachers, and in some cases even school board members.

As you begin your teaching career, your portfolio will be a helpful vehicle for mentors, in-service education coordinators, and other colleagues. Your portfolio will be relied on by supervisory staff charting ongoing career development or making tenure and promotion decisions and to facilitate licensing by the Utah State Office of Education. Most importantly, the portfolio provides you, the author, with an informative and accurate picture of your professional development and growth.

You will find as you engage in portfolio development that you will gain a much clearer picture of yourself as an emerging professional. Your portfolio will provide a record of quantitative and qualitative growth over time in your selected goal areas or standards. You will have in hand a trail of evidence of your progress in each of your teaching standards. This should give you a gratifying sense of accomplishment and pride and help you have ever-increasing confidence in your professional abilities.

In addition, the portfolio may be used by the Unit as a way to keep students and faculty focused on goals or standards valued by the program. Students will be continually reflecting on the standards as their portfolios provide an authentic and meaningful way to be assessed professionally. Portfolios will provide faculty members with evidence of their effectiveness in preparing students to meet selected standards. Portfolios can also help with program evaluation and bring to light the need for new courses, revised course syllabi, or policy changes.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

A number of resources are available to help you get started on your professional portfolio. Before you begin, however, you should become familiar with your Unit's Conceptual Framework, the Unit Outcomes expected of all professional education candidates and the specifics of the INTASC standards.

A pamphlet outlining INTASC standards and the Unit's conceptual framework and expected outcomes can be found on the Professional Education Unit Web site (<http://www.suu.edu/ed/peu/aa/archives/candidates.html>). A tutorial which addresses the use of the e-portfolio™ software is also available on the site.

Several worthwhile books on creating professional teaching portfolios are available through the SUU Library and/or the campus bookstore. You should find *How to Develop a Professional Portfolio: A Manual for Teachers* (Campbell, Cignetti, Melenzyer, Nettles & Wyman, 2001) especially useful.

In addition, a series of mini-courses and workshops for candidates and Professional Education Faculty (PEF) are being developed and will be provided free of charge for interested candidates. Dates and times, will be announced by PEF members. For more information about the portfolio development process contact: Lee Montgomery, Associate Dean, College of Education ([montgomery@suu.edu](mailto:montgomery@suu.edu)).