Meeting Technology Competencies: The Digital Portfolio Approach

Liz Stephens, Southwest Texas State University, US
David Byrum, Southwest Texas State University, US

Prospective employers and accreditation agencies expect preservice teachers to provide documentation of their work in education. Universities are moving from traditional scrapbook portfolios to digital portfolios (Aschermann, 1999). The traditional teacher portfolio is a collection of artifacts from course work and field experience in a three-ring binder (Louisiana Tech University, 1997). In contrast to the traditional portfolio, the digital portfolio is simple to update and makes distribution of multiple copies reasonable. The digital portfolio eliminates storage issues while providing preservice teachers with a powerful means of circulating their work (Polonoli, 2000). Preservice teachers who create digital portfolios enhance their technology skills and make themselves more marketable (Milman, 1999).

Recently, we received a PT3 grant to extend our “Viewing and Doing Technology” program into the elementary school blocks and our field-based faculty. Training sessions for the elementary faculty are held throughout the Fall and Spring semester conducted by faculty who have expertise in certain areas of technology. These new technology skills are in turn used by faculty to model and assign technology components in their classes. For a more complete description of the “Viewing and Doing Technology Project” please see our website http://www.ci.swt.edu/vdt/vdt.html. As part of the grant, the committee charged with setting the standards for the VDT program decided to begin a digital portfolio process for the preservice teachers in the elementary program. The digital portfolios will contain artifacts demonstrating the technology skills acquired during their course of study.

The following are several of the many questions we addressed in considering a digital portfolio showcasing the preservice teacher’s technology competencies.

1. Which technology standards should be used? (ISTE, TEKS, INTASC, others)
2. Which should have prominence in the portfolio, the standards or the content (artifacts, reproductions, productions, and attestations)?
3. What format should the digital portfolio take? (web based, hyperstudio, pdf, PowerPoint)
4. Which web authoring program should be used? (FrontPage, Dreamweaver, Netscape Composer)
5. Should the portfolio be template driven or should students be allowed to create a portfolio from scratch?
6. How much time will it take for students to assemble the portfolio?
7. Should step-by-step instructions be developed to guide the student through the process?
8. What type of artifacts should be included?
9. Should the artifacts be in their native format (for example, a Publisher or PowerPoint document) or should they all be converted to pdf files?
10. How should artifacts be stored prior to being put in a digital portfolio? (floppies, zip disk, CD-RW)
11. How should the portfolio be distributed? (Web based or CD-R)
12. At what point in their professional program should students begin assembling their digital portfolio? (first semester, second, or third)
13. Organization: how should the standards be displayed or presented and linked to the teachers work?

This paper/presentation will discuss many of the questions posed above. The presentation—rather than repeating the printed material—will share the digital portfolio products created by students.

References

