

Moving from the Overflowing Manila File Portfolio to the E-Portfolio

Teachers at every grade level continue to be astounded by the new opportunities technology offers the learning environment. Video-conferencing resources such as Skype, FaceTime, and Google+ provide students with the ability to connect with individuals everywhere. Applications such as SonicPics, Doodlecast Pro, and Book Creator allow students to organize and share their learning in ways they could never before.

Teachers are also looking for new and efficient ways to organize anecdotes and assessments for their students. From binders with checklists to file folders with Post-Its, many assessment tools just not been efficient enough to withstand the test of time. Evernote and PaperDesk are a couple of applications that can revolutionize the way teachers monitor progress and development.

Within both Evernote and PaperDesk , teachers create “notebooks” for each student. Within these notebooks, teachers can track student progress by creating “notes”. These notes can be in the form of photos, checklists, anecdotal notes, and/or audio recordings of conversations and conferences.

Here are a few quick ways Evernote and PaperDesk can help organize assessments, and enhance communication:

Organize Reading Assessments

- When completing reading assessments in the beginning of the year, create a new note for each child to document his/her reading ability. In this note, include a voice recording of the child reading a passage and a photo of the passage he/she read. During conferences, parents can follow along by looking at the passage and listening to the audio recording. Include any photos of written responses to the text the child completed, as well.

Streamline Writing Conferences

- Evernote has a checkmark feature that has many possibilities. One way to use the checkmark feature is in writing conferences. Create a list of skills (punctuation, grammar, spelling, voice, etc.) to assess during conferences. Copy and paste the checklist in each student’s notebook, and when meeting with each child add a checkmark next to the skills he/she could use help. Later, craft appropriate mini-lessons for small groups.

Gather Anecdotal Notes

- While walking around the classroom, use an iPad or iPhone to quickly snap photos of student work and jot down notes to remember. After school, add more detail to the notes to help further assess the children's progress.

Determine Leveled Reading Groups

- One feature with Evernote is the ability to "tag" notes. Once a note is tagged, it can be filtered into groups. For example, if a student's reading assessment note is tagged "Reading Level P", a quick search would group all Level P students together. Making book clubs and reading partnerships just got easier!

Utilize Concept Grouping

- Another feature of Evernote is the automatic text detection within photos and notes. Search "multiplication" and all notes with the word multiplication, either in a photo or a note, will filter together.

Identify Exemplar Samples

- In addition to a notebook per student, create and title one notebook "Sample Work." In the Sample Work notebook, electronically file exemplar student samples. To do this, simply snap a photo with an iPad or iPhone and add the photo to the Sample Work notebook. These student work samples can be shared with students as models or with parents at conferences.

Enhance Parent-Teacher Conferences

- The material gathered in an e-portfolio offer teachers the opportunity to share authentic work samples with parents. As parents listen to their child reading a passage, reflecting on content learned, and setting goals for themselves, parents are able to better understand their child as a learner in the classroom context. These work samples allow for teachers and parents to connect and become better advocates for the child's individual growth and development.

Challenge: Move beyond the teacher directed Portfolio

Documenting student progress can become much more efficient with the help of Evernote and PaperDesk, but it does not have to stop at the teacher. Recent literature in the area of assessment advocates for students to take charge of their own portfolio development --site serafani--. In this process, students are given the opportunity to be accountable and self-reflective. When students share their portfolios with their peers they take confidence in their learning and pride and their progress.

About the Authors

Brandy Wortinger has been teaching for seven years, and is presently a 4th grade teacher at Catherine Cook School in Chicago. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from Indiana University. Brandy sees herself as an active learner participating in professional development opportunities and enrolling in higher education courses. She also enjoys providing students with opportunities to explore their unique interests, and is currently leading an after school club for children interested in mathematics and programming logic.

Brian Puerling is Director of Education Technology at Catherine Cook School in Chicago as well as the author of "Teaching in the Digital Age." He went to the University of Wisconsin La-Crosse and graduated with a degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. It was at UW-L in fact where Brian discovered a passion and interest in early childhood education. While teaching preschool in the Chicago Public Schools, he went on to get his Masters in Early Childhood Education at the Erikson Institute along with achieving National Board Certification. Brian's wife Emily, and daughter Lydia, and he live in Chicago.