

## Learning Portfolios as Formative Assessment

### PDIG 2021-22 Final Report

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#### TEAM MEMBERS:

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#### Project Description:

Our project explored learning portfolios as a cross curricular means for teachers to efficiently and effectively collect evidence of student learning in a way that is inclusive and that would emphasize progress. Portfolios have been commonly used in our system for many years but are often not used to their full potential and are frequently showcases of student final products instead of a means of tracking process and progress. Our project brought together teachers from different elementary schools in our School Board to discuss the portfolio as a tool that would empower students to be partners in their own learning and encourage them to reflect on “what am I learning?”, “why am I learning it?” and “How will I know if I got there?”. We wished to diversify the types of evidence collected in a portfolio to reflect ways to track learning with firm goals but flexible means.

When we initially examined the difference between a showcase and a learning or process portfolio key discoveries were that, while a showcase portfolio focuses on polished products and highlights achievement, a learning portfolio tracks student progress over time and creates a space for students to reflect on their own learning. The teachers who are part of the team teach young students who don't always have access to technology. We discussed the pros and cons of a digital, paper or hybrid portfolio and we decided that we would create templates and documents that could be used in any format. Though students will likely work mainly on paper, the ability to also include digital artifacts was important in order to allow for students to show their learning in multiple ways. We decided to experiment with hybrid models. Our vision of digital portfolios making evidence collection easier and more streamlined wasn't realistic based on student access to the technology needed. Consequently, we carefully designed all templates to work in both print and digital formats. Additionally, to be able to work efficiently using a hybrid model of a portfolio, structures and organization were key in order to facilitate collecting student work in both the paper and digital format, methods such as QR codes, google classroom, google slides, etc. were examined. Digital portfolio templates from slidesmania.com were considered as good options for teachers wishing to set up a digital version with their students.

It was also decided during our discussions that, when developing our resources, for ELA we would focus on the Writing competency and in Math, the Reasoning competency with a focus on multiplication.

Important resources built during the course of the project align with our project description and goals. These resources provide teachers and students with a way to anchor the portfolio and be able to track progress over time using the quick formative assessments teachers might ask students to do for the learning portfolio.



Teachers appreciated the ability to work collaboratively across several schools. The professional dialogue that came from meeting over the course of the PDIG was enriching and reassuring. Delays due to Covid closures and restrictions had a major impact on our project resulting in not being able to test the use of learning portfolios with students in a consistent way, tools were developed too late towards the end of the year to make them practical for use this year. However, the teachers involved plan on using them with consistency beginning at the start of next year due to the value they see in the resources. Another challenge, as mentioned previously, was the limited access to technology teachers faced with their younger students. Our planned focus on digital portfolios was impractical due to this constraint. However, a focus on student self reflection, always having learning targets in mind when planning and sharing them with students, and an easy way to assess and track progress were practical in either paper or digital scenarios.

### Project Goals:

The main goal of our project could be described as wanting to support teachers in using learning portfolios as tools for formative assessment in both ELA and Math.

A further breakdown of these goals would be:

- For teachers to familiarize themselves with the advantages of using portfolios and understanding the various types.
- The creation of learning targets and learning profiles for ELA and Math
- The creation of assessment tools
- The streamlining of the collection of evidence, tracking of progress, and providing of feedback
- The sharing of feedback on the tools and tasks developed and discussion around them that influenced instructional decisions by looking at student samples.
- The discussion of the effectiveness of a learning portfolio as formative assessment and their effect on instructional agility.

We were primarily successful in reaching those goals in that we created:

- Learning Targets for ELA and Math
- Tracking Tools
- Student and Teacher Learning Profiles
- A baseline task in ELA and Math
- Model templates for providing students with feedback that included a place for them to self reflect.

The one goal that was not reached was the creation of a digital portfolio template, as it was realized that technology could prove a barrier and all resources had to work in all formats. It will be suggested, when sharing the materials and thinking from this PDIG that teachers might like to check out the various templates available online. Support on how to work with portfolios digitally could be provided by the Consultants when and if teachers would like to explore that option.

### Project Outcomes:

The work of defining learning profiles, a learning portfolio, and a common formative assessment to collect evidence of student learning did, very clearly, increase teachers' expertise related to instructional practice and assessment literacy. Working collaboratively to create strategies and resources that support the use of a portfolio and learning profiles to track student progress absolutely deepened teachers' overall understanding of their students' needs. Because the project focused on formatively assessing students to better understand and act on their needs, clarity was gained in both subjects related to what students actually needed to focus on in learning- highlighting the important aspects of our programs and progressions of

learning. An important outcome of the project related to its success was that teachers involved are working explicitly to be able to continue working together to develop a model of instruction for next year using portfolios. They will seek other avenues of funding in order to continue collaborating.

## Reinvestment

As described in the section- Project Goals, the project resulted in five key resources:

- Student friendly Learning Targets for ELA and Math
- Student friendly learning profiles
- Teacher references for learning profiles
- Tracking tools
- Baseline Assessments
- Student work/self reflection work templates

All resources will be shared within professional development sessions offered by ELA and Math consultants early in the next school year. Adaptations for other grade levels beyond Cycle 2 are already being worked on.

The ELA and Math consultants for the School Board will also share the resources developed with their colleagues across the province by sharing them at their DEEN subcommittee meetings.

Teachers will continue to work together and collaborate on planning instruction for the upcoming school year using the resources and sharing them with their colleagues.