

Dr. Mark Carleton
Headmaster
Philip Canon
Head of Middle School

Presbyterian School
5300 Main Street
Houston, TX 77004

Dear Dr. Carleton and Mr. Canon,

I feel privileged to be able to work in an organization that embraces out-of-the-box thinking and innovation. Geographically, we are right in the middle of Houston's booming art scene with one of the largest museum districts in the country, and we are just a couple minutes away from the largest medical complex in the world. Presbyterian School prides itself on giving children "the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential- intellectually, physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually- in a supportive yet challenging environment". About 5 years our school adopted a 1:1 technology system for students in grades 4-8. Every student in these grades is given an iPad and in the last 5 years, there has been tremendous growth in the usage of this technology, however, there is still improvement to be made.

When I am not in Early Childhood, I am upstairs teaching 8th Grade Photography, and in the three years that I have taught this Fine Art Elective, I have made note of some things that I believe will make our Fine Arts department and entire school stronger. As I mentioned earlier, we are surrounded by some wonderful museums and we are doing an amazing job of exposing our children to the art we see all around us from Beta-8th Grade. As a Fine Art Graduate myself, one of the first things I talk with my students about at the beginning of every quarter, is the process of learning and growing as artists through critiques. Many of my students have never heard of the word "critique" in terms of Fine Art, so we spend some time discussing. Ideally, I would love to have students come in at the beginning of each week with new work to show the class and myself. The way I would like the critiques to run, is for the students to already have their digital photographs uploaded online, done on their own time, so that when it is time for class, I can AirPlay from my MacBook and we can visit the work. Currently, the way we are doing this is very time consuming and takes up a lot of hard drive space on my personal laptop.

This brings me to the idea of implementing ePortfolios in Division III. What exactly is an ePortfolio? As one of my professors put it, an ePortfolio is simply "**a learner's digital evidence of meaningful connections**". It is a place for one to reflect and make connections. A digital evidence of learning. Creating an ePortfolio would be an extremely valuable learning tool for anyone. As you can read in my Literature

Review, there is plenty of research that supports the fact that a number grade does not determine whether we know something. And as John Dewey put it, "We do not learn from experience.... we learn from *reflecting* on experience." I strongly believe that if students in grades 5-8 begin working on building an ePortfolio to house their work and have a designated area to reflect through writing, they will be leaving Presbyterian School with something very powerful, and something that is their own. We have all seen our 8th graders go through the grueling high school application process, and although the process will not be getting any easier, how wonderful would it be for our students to be able to put down on their applications, the URLs for their ePortfolios so that other institutions can view them and get a glimpse of who they are? Hopefully, as they continue through high school, students will have already gotten into the routine of utilizing the ePortfolio so that by the time they are applying for colleges, this ePortfolio has morphed into an "educational resume" that higher institutions can review.

My ultimate goal is for students to be able to utilize the ePortfolio for all classes in their school day and to get into the routine of self reflection. Educators across the country have started to use digital portfolios because they "recognize that the process has the power to transform instruction." Through the process of creating their own portfolios, "students become highly engaged in their own learning ... and assume considerable responsibility for the learning". We live in a time where technology is embedded in students' lives through social media and mobile devices. Students generally have positive inclinations towards technology, so let's effectively implement technology in student learning to enhance engagement and to prepare them for the future.

I appreciate your consideration of my plan to implement the ePortfolio in Division III and I am happy to help lead the implementation, should it get approved. I will follow up with a more detailed implementation outline and I am also excited to discuss my research of the benefits of the student ePortfolios with the leadership team.

Sincerely,

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