

## A REVIEW OF GLOBAL TRENDS

There is an abundant amount of information available to educators that it is impossible to sit and read it all. Now with internet accessibility, the online reports and studies offer up data instantly, and it can be overwhelming to look at the amount of information that is now available to us. It is important to be able to scan reports and look for the data that applies to you. I think many educators don't take the time to read the literature, or even access their professional learning communities, but maybe occasionally might run a quick google search on the topic at hand. I know this because I was one of them.

I never thought I would be a teacher, and so my first year in the classroom, I was overwhelmed when it came to looking for teaching strategies and finding inspiration online. I didn't utilize the reports, because I didn't know about them. I didn't access my PLCs because I didn't know what a PLC was! I have learned a great deal during this time, and I now know that pulling up market trends and staying current is vital. Throughout my research, I have found several ideas to support the teaching and implementation of the digital or "ePortfolio" for our middle school students.

1. As mentioned in my proposal, the ePortfolio is, potentially, one of the most powerful tools we can give our students. "It is a place for one to reflect and make connections. A digital evidence of learning." It is an electronic record of achievement that can be constantly sorted and curated over time. (Batson, 2012).
2. According to the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, "43 percent of students feel unprepared to use technology as they look ahead to higher education or their work life" (NME Foundation, 2011). This is very alarming. We live in a digital world, and students need to be comfortable with using technology throughout their school years, as these are 21st Century skills that they will need in the workplace.
3. As Dahlstrom noted in his 2015 ECAR report, "technology is embedded in students' lives, and students generally have positive inclinations towards technology (ECAR, 2015). Let's effectively implement technology in student learning to enhance engagement and to prepare them for the future.
4. In both 2014 & 2015, Horizon reports the shift toward deeper learning approaches for students as one of the major developments toward the acceleration of technology adoption in K-12 education (Horizon, 2014)(Horizon, 2015).
5. The 2015 Horizon report cites project-based learning, inquiry-based learning and challenge-based learning as additional methods that foster more active learning experiences for our students (Horizon, 2015).
6. It is also important to note that educators have started to use portfolios because they "recognize that the process has the power to transform instruction." (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997) Through the process of creating their own portfolios, "students become highly engaged in their own learning ... and assume considerable responsibility for the learning (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997).

7. How can we use portfolios to assess student understanding? Through their collection of student work, that is their eportfolio, educators are able to assess the documentation of higher order thinking skills and performance skills that are necessary for students (NME Foundation, 2011).
8. Another item to note is that educators may begin to see student performance evaluations based on more than just the standardized tests successes but weighed on the following components (The Classroom Teacher, 2015):
  - Student learning objectives
  - Portfolios
  - District pre and post tests
9. In the 2015 ECAR report, students were asked to share their experiences with a set of resources and tools that are found on college campuses. Some of these included laptops in class, e-books, online collaboration tools and social media as a learning tool, just to name a few. The ePortfolio was 1 among 4 tools that may be achieving their potential, according to students (ECAR, 2015).
10. It would be great for our eighth graders to be able to use their ePortfolios that they will have been working on for 3 years as a “resume” of sorts when filling out high school applications. Research shows that “portfolios can be used as an authentic assessment tool in the classroom, or as a method to showcase your professional accomplishments” ([TeacherVision.com](http://TeacherVision.com)). The ePortfolio is wonderful tool for students to reflect on their learning and it is a great way for them to stand out.

Based on the research provided, it is evident that the benefits of student ePortfolios are bountiful. We have the opportunity to equip students with the necessary tools and skills they will need for the future, but it starts with us. If ALL teachers do not start acknowledging that technology is here to stay and do not start taking advantage of it in the classroom by using it to effectively teach, we will continue to have students entering the workforce feeling unprepared to use technology.

## **Resources**

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