

An ePortfolio Revolution: An Action Research Plan

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The primary objective of this Action Research Plan is to address the ongoing need for students in upper-level high school graphic arts courses to develop greater ownership of their learning.

While students in Graphic Design II (11th grade students) and Graphic Design III (12th grade students) produce a wide range of projects, traditional grading practices often emphasize the final product rather than the process of growth, reflection, and self-direction. By integrating digital ePortfolios, students gain an opportunity to curate their work, reflect on their creative choices, and build a professional presence that extends beyond the classroom. Existing research indicates that ePortfolios promote motivation, reflection, and self-directed learning (Barrett, 2007; LearningMole, 2024); however, their specific impact on student ownership within the context of the visual and graphic arts remains underexplored. This plan aims to investigate how the structured use of ePortfolios in grades 11 and 12 can transform students from passive recipients of feedback to active agents in their artistic and academic journeys, while also equipping them with transferable digital skills for future academic and professional contexts.

Fundamental Research Question

This research question is important because ownership of learning is a critical factor in student success, particularly in creative fields like graphic arts where personal expression and self-direction are essential. Too often, high school students view assignments as tasks completed for a grade rather than opportunities to showcase growth, creativity, and individual voice.

Implementing ePortfolios provides students with a structured way to document their progress, reflect on their artistic choices, and take pride in curating their work for an authentic audience. For 11th- and 12th-grade students preparing for college, careers, or professional certifications, developing ownership through ePortfolios not only deepens their engagement in the classroom

but also equips them with lifelong skills in self-reflection, goal-setting, and professional presentation. Research demonstrates that digital portfolios enhance student motivation, reflection, and agency (Barrett, 2007) while also supporting authentic assessment and curriculum integration across learning experiences (Morreale, Van Zile-Tamsen, Emerson, & Herzog, 2017). By focusing on how ePortfolios influence ownership in graphic arts, this research directly addresses the gap between traditional assessments and authentic, student-centered learning practices..

Summary of the Literature Review

The review of the literature demonstrates that ePortfolios play a transformative role in fostering student ownership, particularly in upper-level secondary education such as 11th and 12th grade graphic arts programs. Across studies, ePortfolios are consistently shown to promote autonomy, reflection, and professional identity development by requiring students to curate artifacts, set goals, and document growth over time (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015). This process allows students to move beyond isolated assignments to create “living portals” that narrate who they are and who they aspire to become, bridging classroom learning with future educational and career pathways (Nguyen, 2013). Research also indicates that ePortfolios encourage critical thinking and curriculum integration, providing students with authentic opportunities for agency, decision-making, and meaningful reflection on their creative process (Morreale, Van Zile-Tamsen, Emerson, & Herzog, 2017). Collectively, the literature establishes that ePortfolios are not only effective tools for assessment but also vital platforms for building ownership, motivation, and lifelong learning skills that prepare high school students for postsecondary success.

Study Information

To investigate how the implementation of ePortfolios impacts student ownership in 11th and 12th grade graphic arts, this action research project is organized around a clear research design and systematic data collection process. The **Research Design** outlines the methodological framework and approach guiding the study, while the **Data Collection** section details the tools, procedures, and strategies that will be used to gather both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Together, these components ensure that the study captures measurable outcomes as well as the lived experiences of students and teachers, providing a comprehensive understanding of the role ePortfolios play in fostering ownership of learning.

Research Design

The research design for this study follows a **mixed-methods action research model** focused on examining how ePortfolios influence student ownership in 11th and 12th grade graphic arts. Action research is the most appropriate approach because it is cyclical, reflective, and directly tied to classroom practice, allowing the researcher to implement, observe, and refine ePortfolio use in real time. The mixed-methods component strengthens the study by combining both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitatively, student surveys and rubric-based portfolio evaluations will measure levels of ownership, reflection, and growth over the course of the school year. Qualitatively, student reflections, teacher interviews, and analysis of ePortfolio artifacts will provide deeper insight into how students perceive and demonstrate ownership of their creative work. This design not only provides measurable evidence of change but also captures the lived experiences of students and teachers. By integrating both types of data, the study will triangulate results, ensuring validity and reliability while producing findings that are meaningful for both classroom practice and the broader field of digital learning in the arts.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this study will occur over the course of one academic year, ensuring that changes in student ownership and reflection are measured consistently throughout the implementation of ePortfolios. At the **beginning of the school year (August–September)**, students will complete an initial survey to establish baseline data on ownership, motivation, and reflection (see Appendix A). They will also begin setting up their ePortfolios, documenting their first projects and initial reflections. In the **mid-year period (December–January)**, a second round of surveys will be administered, portfolio rubrics will be applied to evaluate growth, and student focus groups will be conducted to capture perceptions and experiences to that point (see Appendix A and B). Teachers will also participate in mid-year interviews to provide feedback on classroom implementation and observe any changes in student performance (see Appendix C). During the **end-of-year phase (May)**, final surveys, rubric evaluations, and interviews will be conducted, alongside a comprehensive artifact analysis of completed ePortfolios (see Appendix A, B, C and D). This will allow the researcher to track how ownership develops across the academic year, from early setup and initial reflections to final curated portfolios that demonstrate growth, identity, and readiness for future opportunities. By structuring data collection around this year-long timeline, the study ensures a balanced capture of both short-term adjustments and long-term outcomes of ePortfolio use.

Sharing and Communicating Results

The results of this research will be shared with CTE colleagues, administrators, and instructional coaches in professional learning communities, as well as with district curriculum leaders and digital learning specialists who guide instructional innovation. Sharing with these groups ensures that findings directly inform classroom practice and provide opportunities for scaling ePortfolio use across programs. Results will also be presented at educational technology and CTE

conferences and submitted to practitioner journals to contribute to the broader field of applied digital learning, particularly in secondary creative disciplines. Finally, students will present their own ePortfolios at end-of-year showcases for parents, peers, and community members, reinforcing the importance of ownership and celebrating their achievements. These groups were chosen because they are the primary stakeholders who can benefit from the research: teachers and administrators can implement and support best practices, district leaders can drive systemic change, professional audiences can expand the academic conversation, and students and families gain authentic recognition of growth and readiness for future success.

Final Reflection

At the conclusion of the study, I will reflect on the entire research process by analyzing both the successes and challenges of implementing ePortfolios in 11th and 12th grade graphic arts. This reflection will involve reviewing how effectively the research design captured evidence of student ownership, evaluating the quality and consistency of data collection, and identifying areas where adjustments could strengthen future cycles of action research. I will also consider how my role as both teacher and researcher influenced the process, particularly in balancing instructional responsibilities with objective data analysis. Reflection will include examining student and teacher feedback to understand the lived experiences behind the data and noting whether the outcomes aligned with the initial goals of fostering reflection, agency, and professional identity. Finally, I will document lessons learned about implementation, sustainability, and scalability, ensuring that the study not only informs my classroom practice but also contributes to ongoing improvement and innovation in CTE and digital learning.

Appendix A

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdHupwLmDXkJ_QemYzjaZrKNTjOjQ90RcS9Ub_0xnoCab8A/viewform?usp=header

Appendix B

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfDU_mhOJEdhOdAgVzefO6r1deWFyC89g7WzV05Pjyv0JVFag/viewform?usp=header

Appendix C

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeKcA4nrL6i6_Fk6h27CDRpeSiDslrP6V8Ygyzexe sP-R0D5Q/viewform?usp=header

Appendix D

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc4MyUSuERDSKXjO98Yjkv-H6RvbRqGL7IXbm7pcVYVakdZdg/viewform?usp=header>

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