

A Review of the Literature: An E-Portfolio Revolution

An E-Portfolio Revolution

A Review of the Literature

By

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Introduction

For high school students in 11th and 12th grade graphic arts programs, the transition from classroom learner to career-ready professional requires more than completing projects—it demands reflection, ownership, and the ability to present a coherent artistic identity. Research indicates that ePortfolios offer this opportunity by serving as a robust collection of student work that fosters reflection, goal-setting, and self-regulation (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015). In graphic arts, where the creative process is as important as the final product, ePortfolios allow students to document design choices, revisions, growth over time, and provide an authentic space for reflection that deepens learner engagement and demonstrates growth over time (Barrett, 2007) reinforcing their role as active agents in their own learning (Morreale et al., 2017).

EPortfolios also strengthen identity development by enabling students to narrate who they are as artists while preparing for college and career readiness. (Nguyen, 2013). The act of curating and designing an ePortfolio mirrors professional design practice, helping students develop digital literacy, personal branding, and critical reflection skills (Chun-Burbank et al., 2023). By integrating these practices into upper-level graphic arts programs, ePortfolios transform student work into a showcase of ownership and readiness, equipping learners with both the mindset and portfolio necessary for higher education and creative careers. Grounded in current supporting literature, I plan to investigate the topic of “How does the implementation of ePortfolios in 11th & 12th grades impact student ownership in graphic arts?”

Review of the Literature

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Ownership of an ePortfolio in the 11th and 12th grade graphic arts classroom is defined by students' ability to take responsibility for curating, reflecting on, and presenting their creative work in ways that express both personal growth and professional identity. Research indicates that when learners select artifacts, set goals, and reflect on their progress, they develop autonomy and self-regulation, both of which are key aspects of ownership (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Morreale et al., 2017). The ePortfolio becomes more than a storage tool; it is a "living portal" where students narrate who they are as artists, connecting past projects to future aspirations (Nguyen, 2013). Furthermore, by designing their portfolios with creative freedom, students mirror professional practice, strengthening their digital literacy and sense of accountability for their learning (Chun-Burbank et al., 2023; Zhang & Tur, 2022).

Advantages

The literature highlights that ePortfolios in upper secondary education foster ownership by promoting autonomy, reflection, and professional identity, making them especially valuable in creative disciplines like graphic arts. By selecting and curating their work, students strengthen self-regulation, critical thinking, and goal setting, while reflective practices mirror the consistent refinement of the design process. According to Barrett (2007), ePortfolios also act as tools of engagement and reflection that balance assessment and learning, empowering students to connect their work with meaningful learning experiences encouraging engagement with revisions and feedback (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Morreale et al., 2017). Described as "living portals," ePortfolios allow students to construct narratives of who they are and aspire to be, supporting both identity development and readiness for postsecondary pathways (Nguyen, 2013). When students personalize their portfolios, they not only take ownership of their learning but also build digital literacy and design skills essential for creative careers (Chun-Burbank et al., 2023). Also,

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the REFLECT Initiative found that when ePortfolios are integrated into authentic learning environments, students show increased motivation, ownership, and pride in their creative work (Barrett, 2007). Reviews further confirm that this combination of reflection and agency enhances motivation and accountability, and persistence research suggests that authentic projects, opportunities for feedback, and management of the portfolio process are critical to sustaining ePortfolio use beyond a course of study (Thibodeaux, Cummings, & Harapnuik, 2017). Transforming student work into curated narratives of growth prepares them for authentic assessment, college admissions, and future opportunities (Zhang & Tur, 2022).

Barriers

While the literature highlights the benefits of ePortfolios, several barriers to effective implementation remain. A major concern is the risk of “lamination,” where portfolios showcase polished products without authentic reflection, leading students—especially in graphic arts—to prioritize aesthetics over ownership of their learning (Shulman, 1998, as cited in Wuetherick & Dickinson, 2015). Time and effort demands can further discourage both students and teachers if adequate scaffolding is lacking, and persistence research highlights that time management was a leading factor in discontinued use of ePortfolios (Thibodeaux, Cummings, & Harapnuik, 2017; Wuetherick & Dickinson, 2015). Issues of access, digital literacy, and instructional support also present challenges, as learners need structured guidance to set goals and reflect meaningfully, while district support and consistent teacher training are critical for success (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Zhang & Tur, 2022), Barrett (2007) also cautioned that without authentic engagement and reflective purpose, ePortfolios risk becoming institutional tools for assessment rather than learner-centered spaces for creativity and growth. Finally, pedagogical barriers arise when

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teachers hesitate to shift from traditional instruction to learner-centered practices, limiting student voice and choice, which are essential for ownership in ePortfolio work (Bundick et al., 2014; Wolfe & Poon, 2015, as cited in Giving Students a Voice in the Classroom, 2016).

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Specific Findings in Literature

The literature highlights that ePortfolios empower students to assume greater ownership of their learning by encouraging autonomy, reflection, and identity-building. Nguyen and Ikeda (2015) demonstrated that ePortfolios foster self-regulated learning by engaging students in goal-setting, monitoring progress, and reflecting on outcomes. For 11th and 12th grade graphic arts students, this means moving beyond completing isolated design projects toward curating a body of work that documents their creative process and growth. Similarly, Morreale et al. (2017) emphasized that capstone ePortfolios foster critical thinking and curriculum integration, enabling students to connect their past work with future aspirations. This aligns with the interpretative nature of graphic design, where reflection on typography, layout, and branding projects enhances students' ability to take ownership of their artistic development. This sense of ownership is reinforced when students are provided genuine opportunities for voice and decision-making in their learning (Jostens Renaissance Education, 2016). In this way, ePortfolios bridge the gap between classroom projects and professional readiness, reinforcing student ownership by making their learning visible, authentic, and connected to future goals.

Summary

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The literature consistently highlights that ePortfolios foster student ownership by promoting reflection, agency, and professional identity development, making them particularly impactful for 11th–12th grade graphic arts students. Research emphasizes that ePortfolios encourage learners to curate artifacts, set goals, and reflect on their growth, which strengthens self-regulation and critical thinking (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Morreale et al., 2017). They also serve as “living portals” where students construct narratives of who they are and who they aspire to be, connecting academic work with future aspirations (Nguyen, 2013; Weber, Cai, & Elliston, 2023). This concept aligns with Barrett’s (2007) REFLECT Initiative, which demonstrated that electronic portfolios can enhance reflection, engagement, and ownership when learners are encouraged to express their authentic voices. Agency is central to this process, as students who are given meaningful opportunities to make choices and influence their learning demonstrate greater responsibility and engagement (Zhang & Tur, 2023; Jostens Renaissance Education, 2016). Furthermore, ePortfolios support learning that uses cross-collaboration of content areas, bridging personal, academic, and professional experiences (Belcher et al., 2023; Chun-Burbank, Payne, & Bartlett, 2023). Despite these advantages, barriers exist, including risks of superficial showcase, technological inequities, and the need for teacher scaffolding to ensure authentic reflection (Wuetherick & Dickinson, 2015). Studies recommend that educators intentionally design ePortfolio implementation with structured prompts, opportunities for collaboration, and flexible choices to maximize impact (Zhang & Tur, 2023; Weber et al., 2023). Collectively, this body of research demonstrates that when effectively integrated, ePortfolios transform assessment into a dynamic process of reflection and identity-building, with persistence depending on how students perceive ownership, voice, and authenticity in the process—factors that directly impact

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motivation and continued use (Thibodeaux, Cummings, & Harapnuik, 2017), preparing high school students for lifelong learning, higher education, and professional careers.

This Review and the Field of Education

The literature demonstrates that ePortfolios advance education by fostering reflection, ownership, and student agency, which are especially valuable in applied fields, such as 11th–12th grade graphic arts. By curating artifacts, setting goals, and reflecting on their creative process, students develop self-regulation, critical thinking, and professional identity (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Morreale et al., 2017). Research further indicates that ePortfolios serve as “living portals,” where learners narrate who they are and who they aspire to become, thereby enhancing engagement and readiness for postsecondary opportunities (Nguyen, 2013; Weber et al., 2023). Although challenges such as superficial use, technological barriers, and the need for teacher scaffolding persist (Wuetherick & Dickinson, 2015), studies highlight that intentional design emphasizing agency, reflection, and collaboration can transform portfolios into powerful tools for motivation, assessment, and lifelong learning (Zhang & Tur, 2023; Belcher et al., 2023).

Strengths and Weaknesses of this Body of Literature

The literature provides strong evidence that ePortfolios enhance student ownership, reflection, and identity development, which are particularly beneficial for upper-level high school students in creative fields like graphic arts. Multiple studies emphasize that ePortfolios foster self-regulated learning, goal-setting, and critical reflection, giving students a sense of responsibility and autonomy in their education (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Morreale et al., 2017). They also highlight the role of ePortfolios in identity construction, describing them as “living portals” where students narrate their personal and professional growth, aligning academic experiences with future aspirations (Nguyen, 2013; Weber, Cai, & Elliston, 2023). Furthermore,

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the literature demonstrates that ePortfolios integrate learning opportunities, connecting academic work to co-curricular and professional contexts, while also promoting digital literacy and professional readiness (Belcher, Sparkman-Key, Augustine, & Borden, 2023; Chun-Burbank, Payne, & Bartlett, 2023). Research also shows the importance of student agency, noting that when students are empowered to make meaningful choices, they become more motivated and engaged in their learning (Zhang & Tur, 2023; Jostens Renaissance Education, 2016). Collectively, these strengths highlight the transformative potential of ePortfolios as both assessment tools and platforms for lifelong learning, especially when implemented with intentional design that balances structure with student choice.

Despite these strengths, the literature also identifies notable weaknesses and gaps. Some studies caution that ePortfolios risk becoming a superficial showcase, where students present polished work without engaging in authentic reflection, undermining their purpose as tools for ownership and growth (Wuetherick & Dickinson, 2015). Others note barriers such as uneven access to technology, varied levels of digital literacy, and the need for teacher scaffolding to help students reflect critically and effectively (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Weber et al., 2023). Additionally, while much of the research affirms the value of ePortfolios in higher education and professional settings, fewer studies focus specifically on secondary contexts, especially high school creative arts programs (Zhang & Tur, 2023). This gap leaves questions about how 11th–12th grade students—who are in a transitional stage between adolescence and adulthood—uniquely experience ownership through ePortfolios in artistic disciplines. Furthermore, these weaknesses suggest the need for future research that more directly addresses K–12 applications, explores

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sustainable implementation strategies for teachers, and investigates the developmental needs of high school students in creative fields, such as graphic arts.

Focus of the Current Study

Drawing from the literature, my action research will apply the proven strengths of ePortfolios—reflection, agency, and identity-building—directly to 11th and 12th grade graphic arts students, a group underrepresented in current studies. While existing research demonstrates that ePortfolios promote ownership, self-regulation, and professional readiness (Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Morreale et al., 2017; Zhang & Tur, 2023), most work has focused on higher education rather than high school creative disciplines. By implementing ePortfolios in graphic arts courses, I aim to address this gap by investigating how high school students utilize them to take ownership of their artistic growth, prepare for college or career pathways, and develop professional portfolios. This study will provide practical insight into how ePortfolios can be tailored for secondary education, ensuring students not only showcase projects but also engage in authentic reflection and identity development—thereby extending the field’s understanding of ePortfolio use into K–12 creative contexts.

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