

Teaching matters

⇒ *Articles and opinions on primary teaching, with tips and ideas for the classroom* ⇒

ePortfolios – using digital tools for content creation, collaboration and assessment

In recent months, I stumbled upon evidence of my learning path in boxes of books and copies archived by my late mother. In it contained copies from a variety of classes in primary school and it was great to be able to look back at progress being made on an incremental basis. Essays, poems, projects, profiles of periods/figures from history as well as copies full of computation exercises ('sums') were compiled according to class and carefully stored in plastic shopping bags. Some of the bags have outlived the shops!

I have also spoken and written about the fantastic schools' collection from the national folklore collection (1937-1939) that has been digitised for nine counties and can be viewed at www.duchas.ie/en/cbes. On trawling through the stories submitted by the primary school children of the time, it is a remarkable record and part of their learning journey. I have heard of elderly people being reunited with the piece of work they submitted at that time.

In the digital age we now live and work in, how might the students of today collate their evidence of learning and store it safely for retrieval at appropriate times in the future? The aforementioned collection of 'shopping bags of copies' and 'the schools' collection' provide a snapshot of incremental progress of the final written product of learning but there are no self/pupil reflections anywhere detailing skill development or any change in learning behaviours or attitudes as detailed in the definition. There is no evidence to support development in oral language or the ability to communicate and collaborate as part of a group - crucial to project based learning.

ePortfolios are student-owned dynamic digital workspaces wherein students can capture their learning and their ideas, access their collections of work, reflect on their learning, share it, set goals, seek feedback and showcase their learning and achievements. When cloud based,

they can provide anywhere/anytime access using a multitude of devices. The ePortfolio is not confined to written text. It can contain a variety of media files – documents, images, video and sound files, spreadsheets, presentations etc

Far from being just electronic folders and files (of varying formats), it is most useful to consider ePortfolios as being made up of three dimensions – see www.eufolio.eu

1. Storage/repository – where the child stores all the files they have gathered/created.
2. Workspace – a communication/collaboration space where children can seek clarification/feedback from peers/teacher on work being developed.
3. Showcase – a space where some final products of learning can be showcased (a schools' collection for the digital age).

When carefully applied, digital tools can be used to enhance assessment practices in a teaching and learning environment. As teachers, we can seek and collate feedback at various points along the learning journey using a variety of tools. Padlet (www.padlet.com) provides us with a virtual wall on which children can post comments, ideas, feedback. This feedback can be moderated by the teacher or can appear on the display in real time.

Mentimeter (www.mentimeter.com) is

another useful tool through which feedback and a range of questions can be asked of students and responses gathered and collated easily.

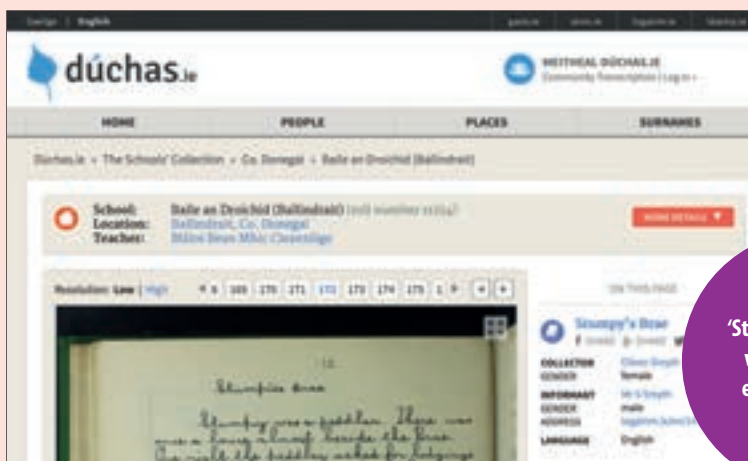
The benefits of seeking and receiving this feedback are borne out in the growing ability of the child to assess their own work. Furthermore, they come to understand what they know, are able to do and what they still need to learn.

Edmodo (www.edmodo.com) can provide both a storage and workspace function for teachers and students as work can be assigned in a closed electronic class. Google Classroom (classroom.google.com) is a user friendly way to manage assignments for a class and both formative and summative assessments can be provided easily.

PDST Technology in Education will provide opportunities (online and face to face) in the coming year to explore ePortfolios in a more detailed manner. Please check www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie; teachercpd.ie and notifications from your local education centre

In years to come, it is hoped that the students of today will be able to look back on their products of learning and their reflections along their learning paths.

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Account of
'Stumpy's Brae' from
www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4493721/
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