

AN EXPLORATION OF PORTFOLIOS
AS AN ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT TO STANDARDIZED TESTING:
CAPSTONE PROJECT

by

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CAPSTONE ARTIFACT PAPER

Introduction

How can portfolios be used as an assessment of Common Core reading standards in an eighth grade middle school classroom? In an earlier course at Hamline, the “Essentials in Literacy and Learning” course, I came upon a description of Kentucky’s former state-wide use of portfolios to assess writing standards (Spandel, 2005, p. 97-99). This, along with a deep frustration toward the status quo of traditional, multiple-choice standardized testing, led me to pursue the aforementioned research question. A study of texts concerning attitudes toward standardized testing and the effectiveness of standardized testing emphasized my belief that an alternative assessment could better measure individual student growth toward and mastery of state standards. For the purposes of this project, I continued my research by focusing on portfolios as the alternative means of assessment.

Description of Project

Essentially, the project itself is a portfolio that could serve as a means of alternative assessment to standardized testing. The project consists of the framework for a standards-based reading portfolio that can be integrated into any eighth-grade English Language Arts classroom in Minnesota as a means of showing students’ growth toward and mastery of standards. The framework design—stored in Google Drive—contains multiple components; however, the most important components are the instructions and

information for teachers of eighth grade students, the instructions and information for eighth grade students themselves, and the template of the portfolio.

When one opens the Google Drive folder entitled “Minnesota Reading Portfolio: Grade 8,” one will find three initial folders and files: “Educators - Minnesota Reading Portfolio: Grade 8,” “Students - Minnesota Reading Portfolio: Grade 8,” and “Getting Started.” “Getting Started” is where every administrator/educator needs to begin as it includes the instructions for distribution of all portfolio documents as well as the links needed to be able to edit several documents.

From there, the “Educators...” folder includes everything an educator would require to successfully implement the portfolios—“Educator Guidelines,” “Assessment Rubrics,” and “Track Your Evidence Charts.” The “Educator Guidelines” include the following: an overview of the portfolio and its purpose, guidelines for portfolio use and instruction, the role of the teacher in the completion of the portfolio, frequently asked questions, scoring information and rubrics, a list of the standards, and helpful checklists. The other documents in the “Educators...” folder—the “Assessment Rubrics” and “Track Your Evidence Charts”—are found within the guidelines, but have also been separated out to promote ease of use.

Similarly, the “Students...” folder contains much of the same information: “Student Guidelines,” “Assessment Rubrics,” “Standard Completion Checklists,” and the “Student Portfolio” template. The “Student Guidelines” contain an overview of the portfolio and its purpose, guidelines for portfolio use and instruction, standards in student-friendly language, necessary checklists, and the assessment rubrics. (Again, the

assessment rubrics and checklists have been sorted into their own document as well to make them more user-friendly.) When students are ready, they are able to add to the “Student Portfolio.” The “Student Portfolio” is distributed to students with an editable link which forces them to make their own copy of the Google Slides presentation—these instructions are detailed in the initial “Getting Started” document. Once students begin editing their individual presentations, they are to add evidence of mastery of each standard and self-reflect about their mastery of each standard.

One major assumption lies in the creation of this project. This assumption—necessary for a reader’s understanding—is that administrators and educators would be given basic instructions as to the nature of the Google Drive folder as well as where to begin with the “Getting Started” document.

Intended audience. This project was specifically designed with Minnesotan eighth graders, Minnesotan English Language Arts teachers, and the Minnesota MCA-III Reading test in mind. For example, in order to match the current MCA-III Reading test for eighth grade, the framework for the portfolio focuses on the same thirteen standards that are used for the MCA-III test per the current specifications provided by the Minnesota Department of Education (2017). However, slight changes would easily make this framework usable with other grade-level standards or disciplines—such as the seventh grade Minnesota reading standards.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

[This link](#) will lead to the Google Drive folder entitled “Minnesota Reading Portfolio: Grade 8.”

Inside this folder are all the components of my project as detailed in the Capstone Artifact Paper. Again, this folder contains several documents and presentations, as detailed below.

- “Getting Started” document
- “Educators - Minnesota Reading Portfolio: Grade 8” folder
 - “Educator Guidelines” document
 - “Assessment Rubrics” document
 - “Track Your Evidence Charts” document
- “Students - Minnesota Reading Portfolio: Grade 8” folder
 - “Student Guidelines” document
 - “Assessment Rubrics” document
 - “Standard Completion Checklists” document
 - “Student Portfolio” presentation

These documents can also be found in the attached folder “Minnesota Reading Portfolio: Grade 8 - PDF version” (along with a folder titled “Examples” containing all of the example files). However, some of the necessary features of the documents—such as links—no longer work. As the initial Google Drive folder and all of its documents are set

to “On-Anyone with the link can view,” it is open to all readers—including those outside of Hamline University.

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