

E-Portfolios

Individual Plans of Study Tip Sheet

**Regional
Educational
Laboratory Central**

January 2025

E-portfolios are collections of electronic documents that provide evidence of students' college and career readiness and activities related to their Individual Plan of Study (IPS). Examples of e-portfolio contents include personal strengths inventories, career interest assessments, postsecondary plans, lists of high school courses selected based on career interests, resumes, transcripts, personal statements or biographies, and records of career-aligned activities such as work and volunteer experiences.

Research findings suggest that e-portfolios can help students develop self-directed learning skills, engage academically, and articulate their strengths.^{1,2,3} Opportunities for self-reflection are integral to using e-portfolios because students can assess how their experiences are shaping their career goals and preparation.^{4,5,6} Providing in-class time for students to build and regularly review and update their e-portfolios can increase the likelihood that e-portfolios are useful tools for students.

Individual Plans of Study in Kansas

Kansas requires all middle and high school students to have an IPS. An IPS is a personalized plan students co-create with educators to align their interests and strengths with their college and career goals and how to achieve them.

Using e-portfolios is a key activity to help students make the most of their IPS. Other IPS activities are career exploration, education and career goal setting, and workforce competency and skill development.

REL Central created this tip sheet in collaboration with educators leading IPS implementation in several Kansas school districts, including Hesston USD 460, Hutchinson USD 308, Northeast USD 246, Piper USD 203, Shawnee Mission School District, and Wichita Public Schools. The tip sheet provides examples of how to use e-portfolios in classroom and school activities. It includes links to tools, documents, and resources that are not endorsed by IES, but which were provided by educators who participated in developing the tip sheet as examples that are currently used in Kansas.

////////////////////////////////////

REL Central has partnered with the Kansas State Department of Education and Kansas school districts to expand the use of promising IPS practices and increase student participation in them.

Why are educators encouraging e-portfolios?

Educators who partnered with REL Central to develop this tip sheet described several reasons for using e-portfolios in their classroom. Some reported implementing e-portfolios for students to **set goals** to understand their progress and to highlight reflection and growth as a key component of learning. One educator valued e-portfolios as a permanent online space for students to **house information** about themselves that can be shared with others.

Using e-portfolios: Example activities from Kansas educators

Students develop e-portfolios in middle school as they begin exploring their career interests and continue to use them throughout high school. Kansas educators are using e-portfolios to help students reflect and set goals, conduct college and career research, and plan course taking. Activities may occur during non-academic periods, often known as advisory or seminar classes, during core-content classes, or as one-time events.

When students develop their e-portfolios, **they create multiple pages or folders to store information about activities they have completed.** This is a space for students to document assignments and

activities during the school year using a variety of methods, such as pictures, written reflections, video journals, or samples of work. [Creating an example e-portfolio](#) can be a great first step to teaching students how to build their own.

Kansas educators reported using three types of e-portfolio activities: reflection and goal-setting activities, college and career research projects, and course planning.

1. Reflection and goal-setting activities

Reflection and goal setting are integral to using e-portfolios. Students' goals can relate to several topics, such as current academics, extracurricular activities, and planning for life after high school.

Every week, ask students to enter their class grades and current overall GPA to their e-portfolio. Have students write a reflection on something that is going well for them and something they want to improve on. Consider having students enter evidence of their progress, which will allow them to track their goals.

Educators' tips to implement reflection and goal-setting activities:

- **Plan different prompts**, which can be useful for setting up a culture of learning by way of reflection in your classroom.
- **Follow up with students** after they set their goals to make sure they are on track or have a plan to continue working towards their goals.

2. College and career research projects

Another way educators in Kansas are using e-portfolios is to store information about students' college and career interests. Educators described asking students to complete research projects related to college and career (see examples below) and add them to their e-portfolios. This activity encourages students to think about their future goals.

College preparation project. Compile a list of 100 different college majors and have each student select two majors from the list. Ask students to research each major, put together a T-chart, a note-taking style of comparing two topics in columns, comparing the two majors, and write a summary about which major they would choose. Ask students to present their majors to the class and explain why they chose one over another. Encourage students to select different majors so the presentations help them learn about a variety of topics.

Career preparation project. Have students complete a career interest inventory. Ask them to research one career of interest based on the results of the interest inventory. Have students present on

Sample questions

1. Which colleges offer this major?
2. What classes are students required to complete for this major?
3. What are potential jobs? How much do jobs pay in careers with this major?



what the job entails, such as its education and skill requirements, need or demand in their preferred location, and salary range.

3. Course planning

Using information from your students' e-portfolios and the available courses at your school, help them **identify courses that may align with their interests**. Information sources could include results from career interest inventories, documentation of participation in extracurricular activities, and other materials. For large classes, you may request that students reflect on their e-portfolios at the end of the year and invite your school counselor or career advisor to present on different course offerings.

"It's [e-portfolios] individualized to them: if it's something important to them, we want them to save it in there."

Teacher, Wichita Public Schools

Developing and sharing e-portfolios

E-portfolios are most used when there are standardized guidelines for students to know how to develop and share them with peers, teachers, and the families. Students can update e-portfolios at regular intervals determined by educators.

- Teachers who integrate e-portfolios with class projects and assignments may have students update their e-portfolios weekly or biweekly.
- Teachers who use e-portfolios primarily to track students' goals may request updates quarterly or each semester.

What should students add to their e-portfolio?

Students can include a variety of artifacts, meaning elements, activities, or documents, in their e-portfolios to indicate their work, achievements, and interests. The following graphic lists examples.¹

Example artifacts



GPA or
course
grades



College
and career
interests



Learning
styles
assessment



Secondary and
postsecondary
courses



Samples
of work



Achievements
across sports,
academics, and
extracurricular
activities



Documentation
of participation
in job shadowing
or other work-
based learning
activities



Short- and
long-term
goals



Journal
reflections



Resumes



Personal
statements



Graduation
requirements



Postsecondary
assets



Documentation
of participation
in volunteer
or community
service
opportunities

How do students share their e-portfolios?

Students can share their e-portfolios with peers in small groups or to the whole class so they can get feedback and ideas from others. One educator has students present their e-portfolios as [PowerPoint](#) presentations at the end of each school year during an exit interview with educators and administrators. Students are encouraged to highlight the aspects of their e-portfolio that are most important to them and are required to review the specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound (SMART) goals they set for themselves during the school year.

“Students can visibly see how they’re doing, and the portfolios allow them to reflect and remember what they’ve done; they are able to look back and be proud of how they’ve grown.”

Teacher, Wichita Public Schools

Educators’ tips for implementing e-portfolios:

- **Reserve time in class** for students to present their portfolios or share with classmates.
- **Review student portfolios** to ensure that students are setting SMART goals and to provide feedback on student work.
- **Follow up on student goals** and understand students’ progress. Discuss what steps need to be taken to keep the student on track.

- **Provide instructions for parents** to access their child’s portfolio.

Recommendations from the field

Educators interested in implementing e-portfolios in their classrooms do not need to start from scratch! Educators in Kansas who supported the creation of this tip sheet provided recommendations for others who might be considering adopting these practices.

General recommendations for using e-portfolios in your classroom from educators

- **Explain the importance and benefits** of creating an e-portfolio. Making it clear that this is a resource for students to reflect on who they are and who they want to be can help further engage them.
- **Embed the e-portfolio process** into your classroom routine and into class activities that are already taking place. This helps students view their portfolio as another part of their education instead of an extra task. It also helps reduce the time teachers need to develop and update e-portfolios.
- **Start small** with a basic e-portfolio and gradually add elements. It takes time to build a portfolio that is completely representative of a student’s experience.

“They’re not getting all of it [e-portfolio guidance] at once. They’re getting little pieces of it and the why behind why we’re doing it.”

Teacher, Wichita Public Schools

Strategies for generating buy-in

- **Teachers and leaders can get parents involved in the process** by providing clear instructions on how to access their child's e-portfolio.
- **School leaders or counselors can provide training or professional development opportunities** to support teacher implementation.
- **Leaders or counselors can start a community of practice** where educators can share tips or ideas for portfolio activities. For example, one educator suggested starting a newsletter that provides recommendations on upcoming activities that students can add to their e-portfolio.
- **Give students freedom and creativity in developing their portfolio.** Increasing student ownership and authority over their e-portfolios helps them feel more engaged and connected with the product.
- **Offer credits or grades** to students for completing activities in their e-portfolios.

Endnotes

- ¹ Alanson, E. R., & Robles, R. (2016). Using electronic portfolios to explore essential student learning outcomes in a professional development course. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 17(4), 387-397. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1131574>
- ² Douglas, M. E., Peecksen, S., Rogers, J., & Simmons, M. (2019). College students' motivation and confidence for ePortfolio use. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, 9(1), 1-16. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1214509>
- ³ Song, B. K. (2021). E-portfolio implementation: Examining learners' perception of usefulness, self-directed learning process and value of learning. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 37(1), 68-81. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.6126>
- ⁴ Summers, T., Pederson, J., Perry, D., Kow, R., Ulasewicz, C., & Wong, C. O. (2020). Strategies for ePortfolio adoption and sustainability across administrative, faculty, and student stakeholders. In *ePortfolios@edu: What We Know, What We Don't Know, and Everything In-Between* (pp. 169-192). <https://wac.colostate.edu/books/practice/portfolios/>
- ⁵ Fallowfield, S. M., Urtel, M., Swinford, R., Angermeier, L., & Plopper, A. S. (2019). A case study in ePortfolio implementation: A department-wide perspective. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, 9(2), 111-118. <https://hdl.handle.net/1805/23689>
- ⁶ Wuetherick, B., & Dickinson, J. (2015). Why ePortfolios? Student perceptions of ePortfolio use in continuing education learning environments. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, 5(1), 39-53. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1107862.pdf>