CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Portfolio Assessment: Putting Theory into Practice

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in English

By

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Abstract

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Master of Arts in English

Many educators recognize the importance of process-based instruction and the power of reflection in one’s academic journey whether it be in the field of medicine or the field of English writing composition; however, assessments that seem far less time consuming or meaningful still take precedence over portfolio assessments in the majority of American schools and educational institutions. Addressing the concerns that educators have when putting the theory of portfolios into practice can ease the apprehension they may feel while simultaneously increasing student agency. Case studies such as “Teachers’ Experiences of Using a Portfolio for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment in Lesetho Primary Schools” outline portfolio practices, teacher responses, and student achievement to demonstrate how portfolio assessments can be successful. Researcher Ricky Lam theorizes what can make or break success when portfolio assessments are utilized at schools where administrators and teachers work together. Leanne Olona, an educator who specializes in Advanced Placement instruction, draws conclusions about how effective use
of portfolios for assessment can bridge the gap between what students experience in the classroom and what they see on the traditional AP exams as well as the portfolio AP exams. This is one reason why portfolio assessment has become an important element in AP College Board instruction. With much to be said for how and why portfolios aid in student achievement, the majority of schools and exams utilized to assess students for college preparedness still rely on traditional multiple-choice questions and/or timed writing due to monetary constraints and time limitations. I propose that schools can begin rolling out portfolio assessments specifically in English Composition classes by beginning with a small group of teachers in the English department. Since many teachers who teach AP Composition classes are trained in such practices via their AP College Board training, this group would be the most logical choice. Once teachers put portfolios into practice, they can train other teachers. This would cut back on the additional cost for outsourced training and diminish apprehension as teachers will have layers of support to guide them as they make these changes in their curriculum.