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How to Create a Portfolio with Evernote (Education Series)

Posted by Rob Van Nood on 28 Feb 2012



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Evernote for Schools

 Join the Evernote for Portfolios Discussion Forum

Bio

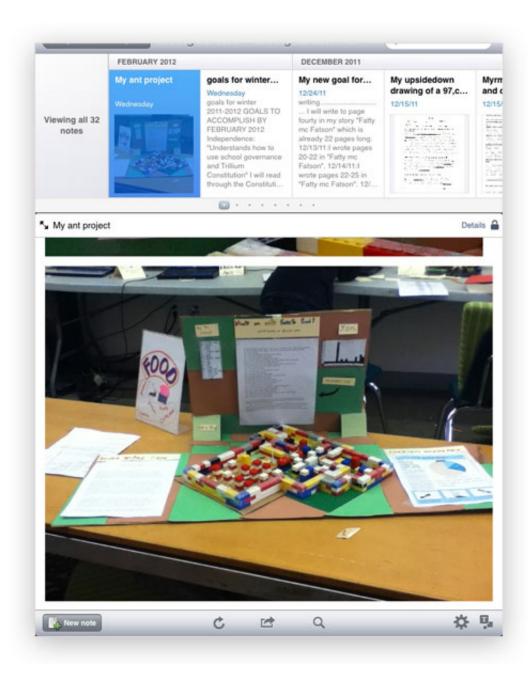
Rob is a teacher at Trillium Charter School in Portland, where he primarily instructs students aged 8-11. He has been working to develop online portfolios with students for the past six years and has taught in private schools, traditional public schools and public charter schools for the past 15 vears.

I use Evernote, Everywhere:

- iPhone
- iPod Touch
- iPad
- Mac
- Windows

E-Portfolios: a student's project warehouse and progress tracker

I started teaching 15 years ago and that is when I first came across this concept of a 'portfolio.' A portfolio is a storehouse for projects, writing pieces, art, and performances. It can be used by students, teachers, and parents to document what they're doing (either day-to-day things or through their best work or improvements they've made). I see portfolios as a way to hold onto and think about what you're doing.



Initially, I had my students create paper portfolios. They would keep a binder and at the end of a project, they'd go through their school folders and pick out their best work or compare two pieces that showed growth.

We had a bin where we'd put these documents and at the end of the year, they'd have 10-20 pieces that they'd take with them into the next school year. The problem with paper portfolios — beyond the fact that they take so much room — is that a lot of this work would never see the light of day. If it's up to the teacher to be responsible for a student's paper portfolio, it rarely gets used.

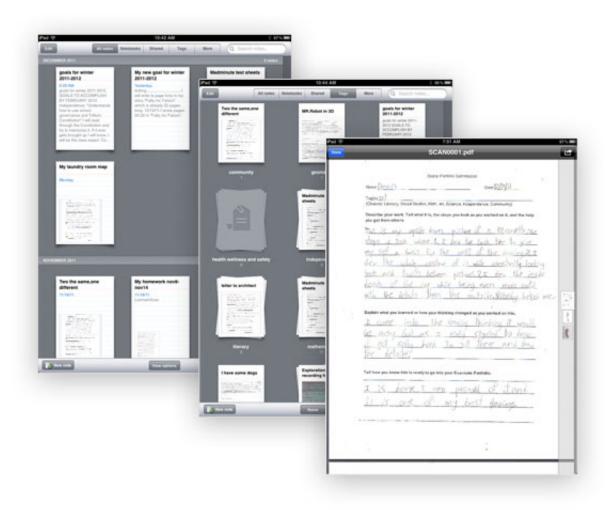
After spending years with paper portfolios, I've transitioned this concept into

digital form, and have started to implement Evernote as the primarily system for creating portfolios in my classroom.

Evernote as an portfolio system

I was using portfolios with limited success and spending a lot of time on them, until Evernote came into the picture.

When I first started researching options, I was coming across a lot of companies that were really expensive, charging a lot for each student's use. I also knew that we needed an app for mobile devices that would make it easy to capture and document paperwork and I wasn't finding that in most of the tools I was evaluating. Evernote was free, had an app for virtually every device, and we could get started right away.



After creating accounts for the students [learn more about how to get set up in the Portfolio Forum discussion] capturing and organizing information became insanely easy. Here is how we are using Evernote in the classroom:

- When our school first decided to use Evernote, we set up demos with the students to show them how to use Evernote. At their age, students familiarize themselves with technology really quickly and naturally. A few picked it up immediately and started teaching their fellow classmates. Getting everyone up to speed didn't take a lot of time.
- Before setting students up with Evernote accounts, I created a set of guidelines for the students so they knew what kind of things to put into Evernote. We also discussed the kinds of tags that they should be using, so we'd all be on the same page.
- Students started asking, 'How can I put this into Evernote?' I set my classroom up with a Lexmark Pro scanner so students are able to immediately capture their work and send it to their Evernote portfolio. They can also capture using any number of mobile devices where they have Evernote installed. They're even able to access their work on their iPod Touch in class.



- When a student comes up with an interesting strategy on a whiteboard, I
 have them write down their name next to it and take a picture of it, or
 record them explaining what they came up with. Great ideas are saved to
 Evernote to show progress over the course of the school year.
- I've actually started **emailing parents with these progress notes immediately after I capture them.** I'm able to show the parents that their

kid had a great growth moment or did something they've never done before. The real-time sharing was appreciated not only by the parents, but also excited the students.

• The final 'piece' of the portfolio work is, of course, sharing. For our Spring conference, we asked students to have one example of work from each area (math, writing, art, kinesthetic) to share with their parents. The students actually taught the parents how to use Evernote at our conference by familiarizing them with their portfolios.

Parent/Teacher conferences and Evernote

Students started documenting their work in Evernote in September and in November, we had a parent/student conference where I met with parents to discuss their kids' progress in school. When I sat down with the parents and their kid, I would simply type their child's name into Evernote, pulling up every single thing I had documented. This way, I was really able to tailor our conversations to a lot of specific details related to their child.

Real-time sharing to show progress

With Evernote, I'm able to show parents their kids' progress in school in real time. They don't have to wait for report cards. Evernote has really changed the way I've been thinking about report cards all-together. With Evernote, we're constantly documenting what students are doing and sharing this feedback with parents.

Evernote for Lifelong Learning

One of the most important reasons for using Evernote as a portfolio system is that it allows students to take their portfolios with them, even if they are no longer at Trillium. Evernote takes the documentation, reflection and sharing out of the hands of teachers and puts it in the hands of the students, who can continue the process. Instead of keeping a box in their parents' basement of everything they've done, students are now able to virtually carry these milestones with them wherever they go and therefore, watch their progress as learners, improve themselves, and continually add new and relevant pieces of work.

Evernote for Portfolios Webinar

Want to learn more about ways to use Evernote as a portfolio? Join Evernote and Rob for a presentation and discussion of the story behind using Evernote as a portfolio at school.

Register here

To learn more about Evernote in education, visit Evernote for Schools and follow @evernoteschools.

Are you an educator? How are you using Evernote with your students? Please share in the comments.

More Evernote for Schools posts:

- Evernote For Schools Site: Resource for Using Evernote in Education
- Student Ryan Kessler Transformed His Workflow, Raised His GPA and Left His Textbooks at Home (Back-to-School Series)
- Evernote for Schools Education Series Roundup
- Evernote for Students: The Ultimate Research Tool Education Series
- Evernote at School: The Montclair Kimberley Academy's 1:1 Program, plus Q&A Webinar



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RSS



Zach —

Rob this is great. The ease of it is what captures my attention after many years working by your side on other not so easy digital portfolio attempts. I am passing this along to other teachers and will soon add a section on portfolios to my teacher resource webpage.

For those of you out there reading this I encourage you to look into this more. Rob is an amazing educator and this is a wonderful opportunity to learn from him.



Rob van Nood -

Thanks Zach for the great compliment.



Robert Oschler -

That's great that you are using Evernote to assist you and your students in such a progressive manner. Have you or any other educational stuff done any studies yet using the Evernote API in concert with the student Evernote accounts to analyze and cross-correlate student performance by subject matter? It would be interesting to see if Evernote usage patterns, analzyed by clustering student usage patterns around various subject matter or curricula (or subtopic), could be used to identify students showing signs of difficulty (or prowess) with particular subject matter thus leading to algorithms that could suggest members for ad hoc study groups that would pair those in need with those who excel in a synergistic pattern.

Thanks, Robert



Abby Butts -

As a parent and Evernote fan, I love this post! I plan on starting a notebook for my son's school and art work for his next school year as I'm running out of room to store the physical papers. He enjoys seeing how far he's come and when he's old enough he can have his own Evernote account!

I'm curious, how do parents react when you tell them you are using Evernote? Are the quickly on board or skeptical? Have other teachers followed your lead and started to use Evernote for their students?



Rob van Nood — Abby,

Parent response varies depending on population. Parents that are really comfortable using technology and accessing online information think it is brilliant. When we held our first Evernote portfolio workshop with parents and students (the students taught their parents how to use Evernote) many parents were instantly sold. That night they downloaded Evernote onto their smartphones, and even began to use the application themselves. The really appreciate being able to access their students work and seeing progress. With my students I often give them homework to sit down with their families and share their work on a weekly basis. This pulls the parents in.

On the other hand there are parents who don't want their children on the computer or having any of their information on the internet at all. There are a few of these parents at my school but mostly at the younger ages 7-8 year olds. They also haven't been fully exposed to the use of the program. They need to be brought on board more slowly with lots of opportunities to demonstrate the power of the tools. We don't force it though. We just try to maintain a paper portfolio for them. This is something I hope to be able to address more as the years go by.

Additionally there is the question of access. We do talk about how to support families who don't have

computer access at home. In some communities this is a really important question that needs to be tackled, especially if a big part of sharing student learning is through online systems. In Portland families can always go to a library to access online content for free. We have talked about having computers for "loan" but then families would have to find places were they could have free access to the internet. Questions around equity do come up when you begin to use technology that not everyone has access to.

For portfolios to really work in a school all members of the staff need to be on board. If one teacher, one grade or one group of teachers uses the portfolios and another doesn't, they really lose their effectiveness. To see real growth you need time. At my school we have yet to have school-wide buy in. The use of Evernote was just piloted with one age group last year (8-11 year olds) and is slowly being expanded. This year the school has decided to make a commitment to using Evernote school-wide, but that means lots of training, hand holding around technology and support. When people start to see the real power behind Evernote as a portfolio tool, it is easy to bring them on board. Mostly it is the "unknown" that scares people away. "Not another system or tool or program" is often the response.

The amazing thing about Evernote is that if you train the kids to use it, it really works. The kids love the technology and really know how to use it. It doesn't rely on the staff to make it work. Once the portfolios are up and running it isn't hard to make it self sustaining.



Tito -

This is the very help full article.



Rob van Nood -

Robert,

Your question about analyzing use patterns and student progress is a great one. I see the use of portfolios developing over three stages. Level 1 involves just the storage and collection of artifacts. Level 2 involves using the portfolio as a workspace and to show "process". Level 3 involves using the portfolio as a showcase for "product". Finding ways to analyze the work that is actually being entered probably would have to start at level 2 or 3 and perhaps not until level 3 is actually being done well. I appreciate the question because it really speaks to how you can look at the work that is being entered to see where real growth is happening. Not having a background in statistical modeling to make something like that effect I would have to look to others to figure out how to best do that.

My one concern around doing that kind of analysis is that it very well could just brings us back to looking at numbers on charts and not real work being produced. As far as I know you would have to start assigning a sort of "grade" to each work entered and that is a slippery slop, especially on a large scale level. Here in the state of Oregon the idea of creating student porfolios was at the forefront of educational thinking at the end of the 1980s. Students would begin collecting worksamples for an ongoing portfolio. To "measure" growth these worksamples would be scored. Eventually (when I entered into the profession in the mid 1990s, the worksamples were only being taken in math and writing and then only the numbers were kept. Student work was collected but just shuffled around in boxes and never looked at. Eventually the tests took over and even the worksamples became secondary.

However, if there were ways to really analyze growth through these portfolios without losing sight of the work itself AND more importantly the whole person, I would be excited to see it.



Gary Luther -

This is a great example of how to use EverNote



jillyfrees -

I'm using Evernote for personal and information management at the moment. Your ideas for e-portfolios are really interesting.

I'm teaching adult ESL in the community sector and getting the students to blog their writing and share via Posterous (for better or worse).

AS I'm teaching at the time of your scheduled Webinar (Melbourne, Friday morning) I was wondering if it will be recorded?



Rob van Nood —

I am looking into the recording of the webinar. I hope to make it available for people afterward. Thanks for the question.



Bob W -

Rob,

You mention 7 - 8 year olds. How do you get a waiver if the age 13 requirement?



Rob van Nood —

The age requirement is a tricky one. Presently I have been creating each child's account which allows me to have access and control over them. I have spoken with Evernote about this and they are fine with it at the time. In effect I have created the account and the students are using it. There is an explanation of how I set up accounts on my blog at http://evernotefolios.wordpress.com/2012/02/16/setting-up-accounts-for-your-students/

Evernote is working on a pilot program where there is some degree of administrative control. I also hope to continue working with them to develop ways to answer questions around security, especially for the younger users.

Another way to make this work is have the parents sign a waiver that allows you to make the account OR have the parents make the account. Not a perfect answer at this time but more to come.



Bryan —

Rob, can you elaborate on the pilot program and how a school might be able to participate? At the school where I work we've been struggling with digital portfolios, but Evernote might be the answer to help lower some of our workflow barriers. Glad I found this post. Thanks.



Dave -

I was a psychologist and technology specialist in the public schools and tried to establish a portfolio system many years ago. The idea of building a portfolio for all the children in a school became quite the topic, discussed throughout the entire country.

Sadly, it never go off the ground because Evernote was only a distant concept. If this app had been around then, I am confident I could have established this system throughout an entire school. But now I am off taking other paths so I won't be pushing this concept forward. This is an idea that must not go away. And think how great it will be when every child in every school throughout a district has a well planned out

portfolio. Universities might even start asking to see a child's portfolio as an entrance requirement. I have an Evernote power user blog at: http://david-pathwaystobliss.blogspot.com/ Why not join us there.



Rob van Nood -

I have been doing this work for the past 7 years and have struggled to make it a reality. The convergence of Evernote and mobile technologies that have cameras, applications and internet access (like the apple ipod touch) have made this work a reality.



Grev -

I have over 240 different Bible topics in my Evernote. I use my Android tablet to take these notes in the local prison to preach to the inmates from. Since I'm not allowed to take my iPhone in there, my tablet is a great way to teach the prisoners from the Binle and to quickly access notes for any questions that they may have. Thank you Evernote for making this program so versatile!



Barbi Walker -

Thanks Rob for posting. I am just now entering the freelance market and as a journalist I have struggled with where and how to preserve my writing samples for myself and prospective clients. This is a great place to start, at least I will have all of my published work in one location and can go forward from here.

Your students are lucky to have a progressive thinker for a teacher.

~Best Barbi



Rob van Nood -

Thanks for sharing. I write about portfolio work in education, but really it can be used across any discipline. .



Chase —

I teach high school physics.

In order to grade lab reports more effectively, I'm making audio recordings on either a microphone or my android, and emailing the audio clips to the students. I can give probably 5x more feedback by speaking about the labs instead of slowly writing comments.

I just ask the students to put their email at the top of the paper before they turn it in.

I also categorized the last 15 years of AP Physics exams by scanning them into evernote, and tagging them by topic. Now, if I need a thermodynamics problem for class, I just click that tag and find EVERY SINGLE thermo problem out of 30+ exams!



Rob van Nood -

That's a great way to give feedback. I'll think about how to make that work in the context of portfolios.



Beth Perry -

I wonder if this concept would translate for college students? To help them develop a portfolio to go along with their resume after graduation?

Thanks for a fascinating idea!



Robin —

Love Evernote as well as your innovative use of it in primary school. I'll be adapting your idea in the university classroom. Thanks and keep us posted.



Rob van Nood -

It would be great to hear how that works for you. The structure of Evernote portfolios really fits into any educational, work or artistic endevor. I have been getting a lot of emails from people at Universities who are interested in the work that I am doing. It is

exciting to see where this all will lead.



Jared Kimball -

This is one of the coolest things I've ever read about Evernote! I'm a huge fan of Evernote, but Rob you just took the application to the next level.

This can be extremely beneficial for students as they grow up and become more familiar with real software applications, instead of just video games.

In my industry people really struggle with software or are afraid of it because they think they'll break something. Using software at younger ages will definitely teach these kids how to become organized and familiar with software.

Very cool.

Jared



Rob van Nood -

Thanks for the excitement. It has been amazing to watch kids learn and use this technology so quickly. It is something they can teach their parents!!



Mario – Hi Rob.

I am very excited about this story and would like to try sometning like this out at our university. I live in The Netherlands so I can't join your demonstration on location. Please let us know if, when en where I can find the demonstration via a webinar or any other kind of video registration. Many thanks!

Mario



Rob van Nood -

Mario,

It is wonderful to get messages from The Netherlands. My entire familly lives there and I would one day love to move there to teach.

What university do you work with?

The webinar was recorded and I will have a link at my blog http://www.evernotefolios.wordpress.com soon.

You can also contact me at rob@engagingeducation.me if you have questions or need support.



lan —

I hope he's not an english teacher. Great innovations though



Rob van Nood -

Me too. I love writing, but never much liked English class. I guess I never had any great teachers. If I make some grammatical mistakes, or forget a period at the end of a sentence, please let me know.



Peg Gillard (@gracinginfinity) —

Thank you for this comprehensive explanation of how Evernote can be used for student digital portfolios. I love Evernote and I love the middle schoolers with whom I work. What a great way for them to begin to document and create a professional digital citizenship and portfolio. And it is FREE! Peg



Rob van Nood -

Yes. Let me know how things work out for you in your class/school. I am always interested to hear about how people are making online portfolios work for them. Innovation takes a lot of minds working together.



Jarod Schultz -

This is very cool... I'm in the professional training industry using Evernote everyday and it is great to see Evernote being used this way... Keep up the great work Rob!



Rob van Nood -

Thanks for the comment.



Jennifer Rodgers -

This gives me hope!! I am a high school art teacher and have been trying to figure out a way to have my students maintain digital portfolios. Evernote seems like the perfect solution.

Do you think it would still be as successful if I only used it within my classroom? My school district is years behind when it comes to technology. What do you think or recommend regarding requiring my high school students to create their own Evernote account? If they have their own account, how could I view their work?

I love your idea about digitally storing the in progress work... sketches, doodles, brainstorming, etc. More and more, my students are required to submit digital portfolios as part of the college admissions process. By starting them off with an Evernote portfolio, they would learn the whole process of creating their own digital portfolio – a must for any artist in today's society.

Thanks for sharing your ideas!



Rob van Nood —
Jennifer.

My suggestion is to just jump in and do it. Districts are slow moving but if you can do something exciting, they might sit up and look. I teach at a small charter school in Portland (360 kids k-12) and the district (of 50,000 kids) wants to meet with me to talk about what I have been doing with Evernote. Districts around the country are looking for new, innovative and simple technologies to start DEMONSTRATING learning beyond all the NCLB testing.

Clearly it is more beneficial for students if they are using their portfolios across the curriculum, but art is a perfect place to start. Grab a few other teachers, show them what you are doing and you could get a groundswell of support. I am a firm believer in following my gut as a teacher. If you do go work and can prove how it benefits kids, most administrators will at least listen.

If you want to learn more about how I have been using Evernote you can come look at my blog. http://www.evernotefolios.wordpress.com.

If you need more questions answered you can also contact me at rob@engagingeducation.me I am always happy to give ideas to get you started.

For you to see a students work they need to share their portfolio with you.



Tom -

Did I miss something? This post is great regarding "how we are using Evernote in the classroom" but I didn't see the "how to..." part.



Rob van Nood —

Come read my blog at http://www.evernotefolios.word

http://www.evernotefolios.wordpress.com and there is a lot more detail of "how" I am using Evernote in the classroom..



Ron F —

Inspirerende manier van werken met studenten en hun portfolio's!

Of in English(sort of)

Inspiring way of working with students and their portfolios. I will try this in class.

Can II USD tour quote: "If it's up to the teacher to be responsible for a student's paper portfolio, it rarely gets used."?

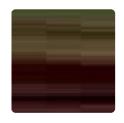
Ron, Netherlands



Rob van Nood -

Heel erg bedankt voor de reactie. Mijn Nederlands is een beetje roestig, maar ik kon nog steeds wat je geschreven hebt, zonder in het Engels aangegeven.

Please let me know how things are working in your class. Where are you working in the Netherlands? I hope to do some teaching there in the future. All my family is there.



V. Balasubramanian —

It is great for students to use a new technology such as EVERNOTE to create their portfolios. It improves their knowledge and skills that may equip them well to face the technological future. However, we should not loose sight of the need for students developing their hand-writing skill, although it may be obsolete during their times. I hope, in the excessive use of technology, humans don't face the risk of loosing the function and use of any of their body parts following the 'Use, disuse' dictum.

Thanks, Bala.



Rob van Nood -

Good point. I always consider technology as a tool not as an end. Much of the work that my students do is in fact in their own handwriting. They photograph or scan the work they have done.

If you go to my website you will see samples of the work. Some of my students do type their work, but most of them still write by hand.



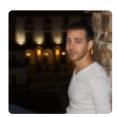
Angie -

Rob - Kudos to you for innovation and stepping outside your job requirements as a teacher. You are benefiting your students so much! Surely the families you work with appreciate you very much.



Rob van Nood -

Thanks for the comment. The use of the portfolios has been received with great interest by the families at my school. They really value being able to follow the work that the kids are doing and having access to it long after the recycling has been taken out at their homes.



Jorge —
Congratulations for your work!

I have been reading your explanations and an going ahead to your blog to learn more, i used a website called weebly to create an e-porfolio in Germany, on my erasmus scholarship. i think evernote is easier to use and share, more useful, let's find more out about it!

mucha suerte! greetings from Cáceres, spain



Rob van Nood -

I know a little about weebly. I looked into it two years ago when I was first looking for a new way to create portfolios. I agree that Evernote is much more useful. Its nice to hear from people all over the world. Mucho Gusto.

Rob



Matt -

Thank you for sharing. It's great for using Evernote in teaching. I'll try it! I'm a primary school teacher in Taipei Taiwan. Every student of my class will get a android pad in September. How can I stop them to install game apps?



Rob van Nood -

Wow, everyone will be getting a android pad, that is exciting. I don't have any experience with the android pads but I do know that with my ipad and the itouch we use in the classroom students can't download anything because I have set restrictions. There should be some kind of password protection that allows you (the teacher or administrator) to control what is downloaded on the the pads themselves. This question could be easily answered online or with the business where you are buying the pads. Goodluck. Please let me know how things are going for you.

It would be nice to hear how the pads are helping the learning in your classroom. They can be great tools if used well.



Rob van Nood -

Bryan,

(who posted on 4/16/12)

I haven't started using the Pilot Program yet. I plan to get it started with my school in September as I am using the last months of the year to really help train staff on the use of Evernote so we can jump right in for a full year starting in the Fall.

If you have specific needs or want to pilot the program you should contact Evernote directly. If you want more support contact me at rob@engagingeducation.me and I can point you in the right direction.



ian mcvitty -

really enjoyed reading aout how you used Evernote.

have been using wordpress for five years as a portfolio tool in my marketing class....and think its time to switch to Evernote.

would realy like the ability to turn evernote into a bibliography-citation tool to round out its research capabilities.

regards

ian



Kathy cleary -

I teach PE and I will begin portfolios in September with one grade level to get my feet wet. Will Evernote support my need to include multiple video clips? Will I be able to add to the portfolio each year or will I need to begin again? I am off to study your blog to learn more about the process, thank you.



Chris Carter -

We have to start using e-portolfios with the kids and I think since we already use Evernote- using Evernote will be an easy and more user friendly than others that are out there.



Rob —

Robert,

This would be great thing to take on. I am very interested in finding ways to use the data from student portfolios to further support their growth as learners. Any suggestions on

how to tackle the kind of question you pose?



Tama Trotti —

Thank you for a very insightful article on using Evernote. This month, I started using it with my first graders. They do not have separate accts, I put everyone's notebook under one Evernote acct. The class is excited to add their work to their notebooks and I am hopeful it will be successful come parent teacher conferences. We are using 2 ipads in the classroom and the children are very adept and photographing their work and with help posting in to their notebooks. Thanks for the inspiration.

Tama



Sheryl -

I am excited to learn more about building portfolios as I just started using Evernote to create portfolios for my 3 kids homeschool progress. I am trying to catch us up fir the year.





Wendi Laing -

My issue is with archiving. The school always wants whatever form of portfolio we create to be able to be archived for students leaving the school, etc... We have tried so many different options, but when it comes to the export and archive issue everything falls flat. I hate Ppts but so far they seem the best option for saving, archiving, and being able to give and share with parents. Especially if they are not tech savvy. The other issue, is sometimes video is part of the student portfolio. Evernote does not offer that option. Court thoughts?



Missi Stec -

Rob-I am doing these portfolios in higher educationspecifically in a Graduate Nursing Program. I appreciated seeing how it translates in k-12 education and it gives further definition of my idea of how it works on all levels. Thanks to you. I have about 190 notebooks I manage with graduate students work including a program encompassing portfolio project. We have made Evernote Premium a program requirement and have a similar ramp up day. I would love to hear more about things you do that may translate to my students.



Alex -

Hello,

We are thinking of using Evernote for student eportfolios. I have a few questions:

1-Did you create notebooks for students within your account? Or did students use their own email accounts to set up their portfolios?

2-How can students carry their portfolios from one year to the next?

3-Do your students use the free account? Thanks,

Alex

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