**The timing of my working on the readings and response for this unit are very fortuitous. Two days ago, I attended parent/teacher conferences at my kids’ school. My 5th grader is having problems with showing what he knows. He basically hates writing (we think that he can’t write as fast as he can think and gets lost and frustrated!) so when he takes a written assessment, he just doesn’t score as well as we know he should. I know that eportfolio assessments would help him because he has already stated that if he gets to use great tools like those for digital storytelling then he would suffer through the reading and writing necessary to make it happen. He can give very in-depth and accurate answers that clearly support proof of mastery of much of the material but those answers don’t materialize well in straight written format. I need to investigate audio and video methods with his teacher in our attempts to showcase his intelligence beyond (or in spite of) standard written assessments.**

**Barrett’s digital storytelling site has some great resources including a handout that helps define digital storytelling for kids and why it’s important. It highlights the procedures necessary in a very usable format. I immediately added the link to both the site in general and the handout in particular to my eportfolio page “websites and software to remember” so it will be available and most importantly easy to find!**

**Back to the conference scenario, I arrived for my 3rd graders conference only to find them running over 15 minutes behind which meant I was sitting waiting for 20 minutes because 15 minute conferences never take only 15 minutes. If there was an eportfolio system in place for parents to view, I could have gone through her work and seen comments from the teacher. Our school has 4 computer labs that could be made available to parents during conference evenings to peruse eportfolios in preparation. I know that personally when I am reflecting on a piece in real-time with another person, I very often find that I walk away wishing I had thought to add this comment or suddenly become aware of a connection that I hadn’t realized before. Written and/or digital feedback would allow the teacher to more fully reflect for myself and my child in a relaxed, non-rushed setting which would benefit everyone more.**

**I really liked Ash’s quote when talking about portfolio pieces being real-world projects that we should “archive before the final product is pushed out to where it needs to be.” I think it is so important to have projects and outcomes that are meaningful to kids in order to increase engagement and potential learning.**

**I think portfolios have too much sizzle if there are lots of tools but you walk away not knowing much about the portfolio’s author. Then again, information heavy portfolios can help you know the author but leave you without a sense of excitement and energy. Portfolios need to have the “steak” in the form of relevant and organized information but that steak needs to “sizzle with spices” through the use of Web 2.0 tools that help bring the portfolio to life. Many of the sites that we looked at for this week’s readings were really dry for me and even though I was very interested in the topic, I found myself having to force myself to enter the door and walk through the “rooms.” Successful portfolios to me invite me to enter the door and entice me to explore all the nooks and crannies of all the “rooms!” Some rooms may not be as interesting or have as many points of interest but they are still full of hope and energy leading you on through to other rooms with more to share.**

[**E-Portfolios Evolve Thanks to Web 2.0 Tools**](http://www.edweek.org/dd/articles/2011/06/15/03e-portfolio.h04.htm)**by Katie Ash**

by [Amy White](http://www.plymouth.edu/webapp/courses2/user/view.php?id=10006&course=16493) - Sunday, November 10, 2013, 6:36 PM

I like your analogy of a good portfolio being like rooms and you want to walk around.  There are some portfolios I really find off-putting.  They are just words.  And there are some that I want to read and I feel welcomed.

To me, the sizzle is when kids (or adults) use the flashiest tools or special effects but when you truly listen or read, there is no content.  Last year when I was working with the kids more directly in production we used to have the policy they had to have a script written or all the content prepared before they could start using a presentation tool.  It really is a good policy.  It forces them to work on the content first and then concentrate on the presentation second.

 by [Doris Buco](http://www.plymouth.edu/webapp/courses2/user/view.php?id=2913&course=16493) - Sunday, November 10, 2013, 10:01 PM

 Hi Betsy,

Our district just completed parent conferences as well and 15 minute parent conferences are rarely 15 minutes.  Other than the one grade level having student-led parent conferences, I continually saw parents sitting in chairs outside classrooms waiting their turn with the teacher.  Our student-led parent conferences are paving the way in our district for e-portfolios. At these conferences, students are sharing their first quarter learning goals with their parents, showing evidence of achievement of these goals, reflecting upon what was/was not achieved, getting feedback from their parents, and presenting new goals for the next quarter.  The richness of these conversations between students and parents is incredible!  We have two computer labs at our middle school, several laptop carts, and each 5th grader now has a Chromebook, so we definitely have the technology available to implement e-porfolios which then can be accessible to parents for these conferences.

by [Betsy Damon](http://www.plymouth.edu/webapp/courses2/user/view.php?id=20904&course=16493) - Saturday, November 16, 2013, 10:24 AM

We have eportfolios but not as a parent presentation tool. They are geared towards providing teacher selected assignments to prove meeting standards and for demonstrating growth over time. I would love to see them mature these portfolios but, with all the district-wide curriculum changes and implementations, I don't see anyone having the time to change that system at the moment.

**Professor Feedback: Thanks for your continued exemplary work on the discussion board.**

* **You have well-developed ideas; you introduce new ideas, and you stimulate discussion**
* **You show clear evidence of critical thinking-application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.**
* **Your postings are characterized by clarity of argument, depth of insight into theoretical issues, originality of treatment, and relevance.**