

Self-assessment of professional growth through reflective portfolios



Université de Sherbrooke

December 8, 2011

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Institutional Background

- Mount Royal *College* opened in 1910
- Attained University status in 2009
- 1990-2010 – University Transfer program
 - offered first 2 years of a B.Ed. degree
 - students transferred to university to finish
 - 180 students per year
- Fall 2011 – first intake of 80 students for 4 year B.Ed. degree

Portfolio touchpoints throughout the program

Annual touchpoint	Portfolio requirement in these courses
2 nd semester	The Teacher: Professional Dimensions 2
4 th semester	Understanding Current and Emerging Pedagogical Technologies
6 th semester	Practicum 1
8 th semester	The Professional Teacher: Integrating Ideas, Values and Praxis (Capstone)

Background to study

- First year university students in intro education course
- Course required 30 hours as volunteers in classrooms
- Collected portfolio self-assessments from 32 of 54 students

Purpose

- To discern the role that **student self-assessment** plays in portfolios and more broadly for reflection in teacher education.
- To understand the teacher candidates' **perceived needs** so that the program can more effectively meet those needs.



Portfolios as “freeze frame”

- “help make teaching stand still long enough to be examined, shared, and learned from” (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005, p. 424).



Source: <http://www2.ferrum.edu/applit/about/studentindex.htm>

Clarity of purpose

- “A lack of clarity about purposes can result in a portfolio that is merely a collection of everything a student teacher completed in his or her program. Such a portfolio tells evaluators **‘everything and nothing at the same time.’**”

– (Darling-Hammond et al, 2005, p. 426).



Alberta Education KSAs

Knowledge, Skills and Attributes of a Teacher

- Planning for Learning (a, c, d, f)
- Facilitating Learning (e, i, j m)
- Assessment (k)
- Classroom Environment (g, h)
- Professional Responsibilities (b, l, n, o)



Planning for Learning

a) **contextual variables affect teaching and learning**. They know how to analyse many variables at one time, and how to respond by making reasoned decisions about their teaching practice and students' learning;

c) the purposes of the Guide to Education and **programs of study** germane to the specialization or subject disciplines they are prepared to teach. They know how to use these documents to inform and direct their **planning, instruction and assessment** of student progress;

d) **the subject disciplines they teach**. They have completed a structured program of studies through which they acquired the knowledge, concepts, methodologies and assumptions in one or more areas of specialization or subject disciplines taught in Alberta schools;

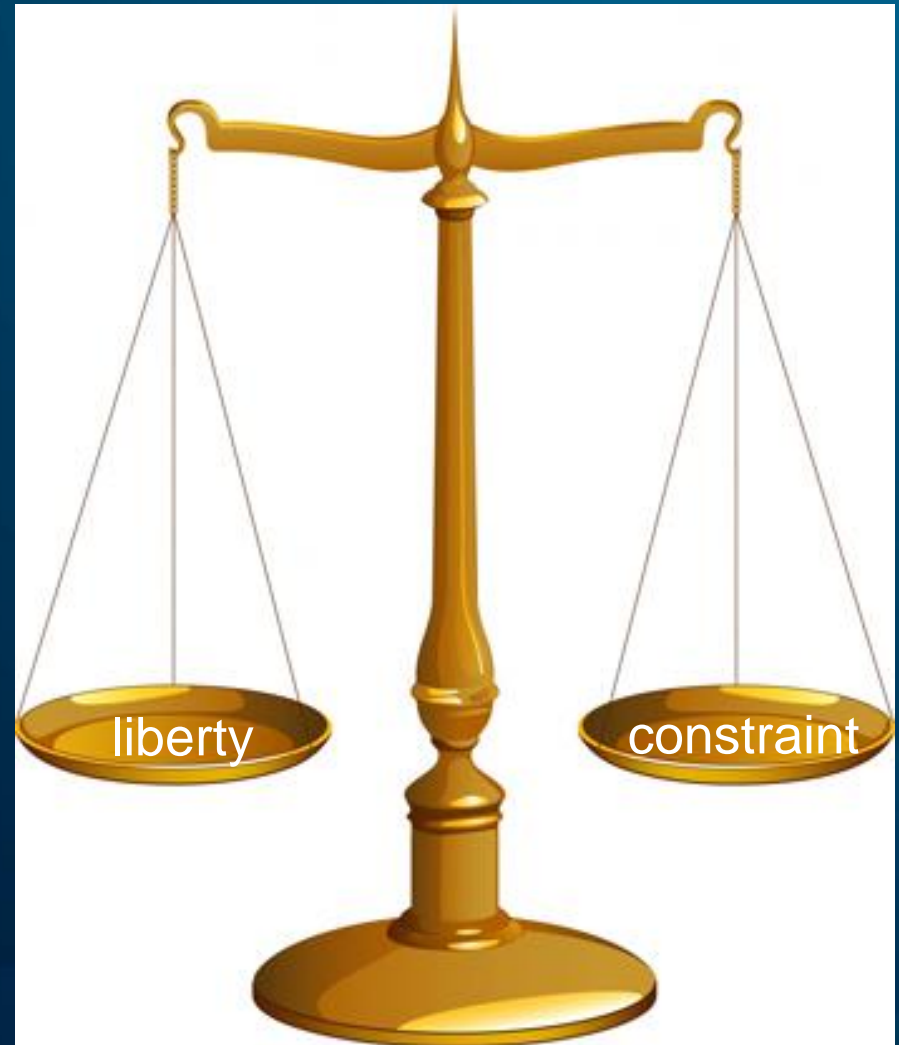
f) the purposes of short, medium and long term range planning. They know how to translate **curriculum** and desired **outcomes** into reasoned, meaningful and incrementally progressive **learning opportunities** for students. They also understand the need to vary their plans to accommodate individuals and groups of students;



Liberating Constraints

(Davis, Luce-Kapler, & Sumara, 2000, p.87)

- **Liberty** to collect artifacts they choose
- **Constraint** of KSAs as organizing template
- Need to ensure the KSAs contribute to reflection on professional growth



Chung and Kim (2010, p.361) caution that while standards can provide coherence they can lead student teachers to focus on...

“basic instructional practices such as improving lesson planning and classroom management”

while ignoring “broader strategies for improving instruction such as empowerment or student initiated activities.”



Portfolio template

- Philosophy of Education
- Resume
- Personal Experiences
- Learning
 - Planning for Learning (a, c, d, f)
 - Facilitating Learning (e, i, j, l, m)
 - Assessment (k)
 - Classroom Environment (g, h)
 - Professional Responsibilities (b, l, n, o, p)
- Summary Self-assessment



Types of Learning Artifacts

- Lesson plans
- Research papers
- Journals (reflections on school experience)
- Feedback from teachers
- Photos of classroom and student work
- School based assessment tools (rubrics, checklists, etc.)

Self-assessment questions

- ❑ *What specific strengths did the e-portfolio help you clarify? For as many of the KSA expectations as possible, identify artifacts that effectively demonstrate your competence.*
- ❑ *What areas for growth did the e-portfolio help you identify? For as many of the KSA expectations as possible, identify specific goals that will help you to direct your learning in future semesters. What do you need to learn in order to be a certified teacher in Alberta?*
- ❑ *How do you think creating an e-portfolio and self-assessing your own learning will contribute to your growth as a teacher, if at all? Why?*



Specific strengths identified



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Planning

- The portfolio helped me understand how important the curriculum is in learning! It also surprised me how broad it was, and allowed you to be as creative as possible as long as specific outcomes were made. (T4)
- Observing and planning lessons for EDUC 1233 and PHED 2255 taught me how to apply the programs of study in order to create a lesson plan and assessment for the students' progress (a). Although preparing for short and long term planning is sometimes said to be challenging, I look forward to creating unique and engaging lessons for my students. (T1)
- I've been able to really look at the curriculum and programs of study in order to get a first hand look at what outcomes are expected of students in each grade level (c), whereas before, I was never really made aware of how and what I will need to cover as an educator. (M13)

Facilitating Learning

- When I consider “e” for example, I think about how I have been fortunate enough to work with a variety of students and have come to understand that students learn in a variety of ways. From learning this, I have been able to construct individualized reading programs and math tests (for example) which serve to increase a student’s confidence in themselves and to help them learn in the most constructive way possible.(T3)
- While working in the classroom I kept in mind that I also needed to take photos of things that I helped out with. For example the pictures of the one student’s journal entries. I typically helped her with her writing when I was at the school. When I began to collect artifacts of my learning I thought about taking some photos of entries I had helped her with. As I began to do that I realized the improvements she had been making since the beginning of the year. This helped me discover that I had helped to facilitate her learning. (T7)

Assessment

- Through working with students on these “sight reading” activities I was able to see firsthand just how effective it is to assess a student’s work with that particular student present in the room. If the student is able to see their own progress, this is extremely motivating for them and my encouragement only adds to their self confidence.
(T4)
- The final strength is probably my assessment example, which is a short story I helped a student edit. I believe it represents my ability to help students become independent, and in control of their own assessment.
(M4)

Classroom Environment

- By watching my teacher use effective rules and procedures in her classroom I learned a great deal about how to effectively set up and run a classroom on a day to day basis. (T6)
- My ability to establish relationships of respect, like those from my work experience, and my research paper on classroom management are both examples of how I am able to address the KSA's on classroom environment (g, h). (M14)



Professional Identity

- It forced me to reflect on things I am passionate about, things I am proud of and things that make me who I am (T9).
- The e-portfolio helped me reflect on activities I have taken part in during the last few years. It is amazing how much these activities changed me and helped to mold me to the student I am today. (T4)
- I have always been a very professional person, but the comments from my partner teacher has made me even more confident with my abilities. (T16)

Areas for growth



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Planning

There are a variety of areas for growth that my e-portfolio helped me identify, when I realized I had trouble finding artifacts to match them. First, for the KSA expectation “f”, understanding the purposes of short, medium, and long term range planning. Although I do understand their importance, I am not efficient at knowing how to translate curriculum and desired outcomes into reasoned, meaningful, and incrementally progressive learning opportunities for students, yet. (M10)

Classroom Environment

- Right now I am just looking at the physical environment, like desks and reading areas, but I think need to wrap my head around the idea that it involves a lot more than just that. It involves the rules that create a safe and comforting place for the students also allow for minimal disruptions to occur. The problem is that I am not sure exactly how to do this....My goal is to start talking to the teachers I know and meet about how the manage their classroom and how they deal with disruptions or children who need a bit more attention. I then plan on observing whether or not I feel their methods really work for the students and what kind of environment they are creating.
- I think that creating a safe environment in the classroom that addresses students' needs for physical, social, cultural, and psychological security is an ongoing process. I do not think that this process is every fully completed, and I also believe that it weighs heavily on the kids that are in your classroom. As a result of this, I was to learn more about how to effectively foster an environment that embodies that aforementioned in the best possible way. (g) (M1)

Student needs

- I'd really like to learn more about how to manage a classroom full of 20+ students. As I have learned in the past year, a classroom is a very complex learning environment filled full of diverse students with different needs....To ensure that my students are understanding concepts and learning successfully, I want to implement UDL into my classroom. With that being said, I would like to see how teachers are using UDL on a regular basis (both in practice and according to a lesson plan).(T1)
- My research paper and my summary of learning makes me realize how I need to learn to teach every student in an individualized manner, that works best for them based on their needs. (T12)

Assessment

- I still need to work on how to give back clear, concise feedback to students that will help them learn and grow in the future. Every student is different, with their own unique needs. I would like to learn how to adapt and accommodate assessment practices to take into account the different learning needs and styles of students.
- Another area for growth that I have noticed is assessment. KSA (k) discusses the different assessment strategies, and I know that I will need to work on how best to make assessment fair and beneficial for my students. My assessment artifacts consist solely of rubrics (and some discussion of formative assessment through teacher feedback) and I know that this is only part of the picture. (T8)

Benefits of the portfolio

Students' perspectives



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Interconnections

- Both of the journal entries (on classroom management) talked about a different aspect. One touched on creating an effective classroom layout, while the other was about creating an effective emotional environment. I wrote these two entries at two separate time so I had never really connected them before, but after putting together the classroom management section I realized how much they truly relied upon one another. (T8)
- Looking at my artifacts in one document gave me the chance to make connections that I had not previously noticed, and helped me to what some of my strengths are. For example, looking back on the paper I wrote about alphabet books gave me a chance to think about the knowledge that I have acquired about children's literature, both from my English course and my 3 and a half years of work at Calgary Public Library. (T8)

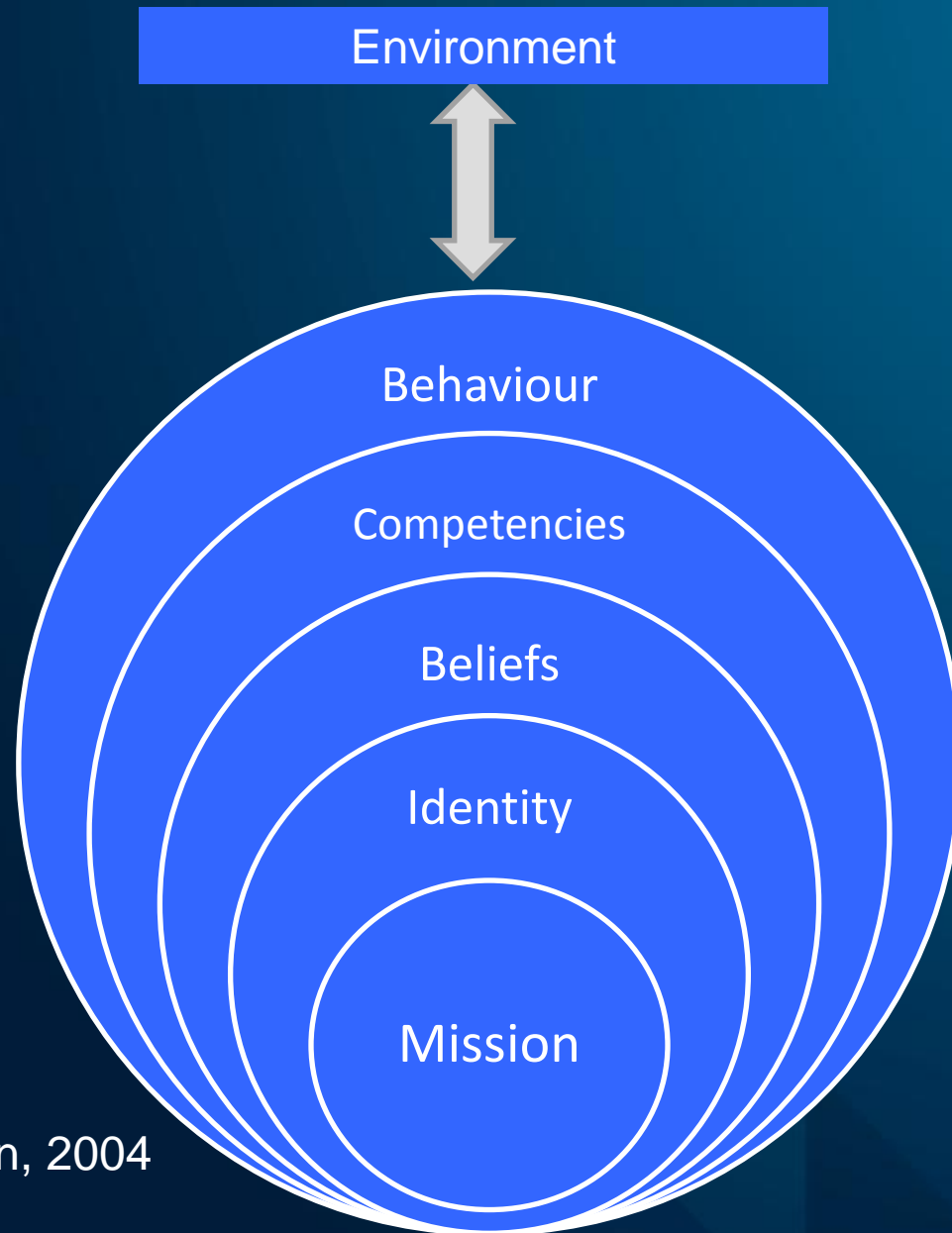
Interconnections

- I was able to showcase my strengths as an individual and shown connections between my current work and my future goals. There were so many different assignments that I thought contributed to my strengths as a pre-service teacher but before I did not have enough time to be able to figure out how all of them could fit together. (M9)
- Being able to see all of this has allowed me to understand who I am as an educator, as this portfolio has allowed me to bridge the gap between my personality and my passion as a teacher. I found this assignment to be incredibly self reflective and my personal choice to be an educator has never been so clear. (M5)

NEW self-assessment question

1. Strengths
2. Areas for growth
3. Philosophy: Compare your artifacts to your teaching philosophy. How do the portfolio artifacts reflect your beliefs and the type of teacher you want to be? What do you still want to learn or practice to better align your teaching philosophy with your practice?





Korthagen, 2004

Teaching philosophy metaphors

- “provide insights into ideas that are not explicit or consciously held...(and) tease out connections which might not be made use of by direct questions.”

(Leavy, McSorley, and Boté, 2007, p. 1220).



Reflection creating cognitive dissonance

If their practice does not match
professed beliefs, student teachers
may “activate a richer narrative of self
which then functions to accommodate
... mismatches between existing and
preferred selves.”

(Warin, Maddock, Pell and Hargreaves, 2006, p. 237).



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