**ePortfolios in K-12 as an Assessment Tool: A Mixed Method Study in 8th Grade English Language Arts Comparison of Electronic Versus Written Essays**

**Luis San Román – Action Research Plan – EDLD 5315**

**Topic of the action research**

The topic of the action research is to assess student work assignments using electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) in eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA). This is part of a disruptive innovation plan to implement ePortfolios as a norm in K-12 education at Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City independent School District (SCUCISD). Students graduate high school with little or no evidence of their work in their K-12 education. ePortfolios will provide ongoing evidence of their work, as well as allowing students to reflect on their own progress throughout the years.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study is to determine if using an ePortfolio as an assessment tool in ELA classes increases writing achievements. For many years, school districts have stopped teaching penmanship in elementary school. As a result, ELA essay grades have declined. The two main reasons are poor penmanship, which makes reading difficult and the second is poor grammar usage and spelling. Students have verbally expressed dismay at writing assignments in my class, often asking if they can type it instead because they have poor penmanship. This study will compare ePortfolio submitted essay compared to pen and paper essays of the same topic to determine if there is significant achievement growth in ELA writing skills.

**Fundamental Research Question**

Does using student ePortfolios to create writing assignments in 8th grade ELA, result in increased achievement versus those who use paper and pencil.

**Research Design and Research Methods**

The embedded design will be used, this model is selected because both the quantitative and qualitative data will be collected in the research, focusing primarily on the quantitative and using the qualitative data to support the quantitative data. The quantitative data will be embedded with the qualitative data. The reliability of the quantitative data will be determined using the Kuder-Richardson formula 21 (KR-21). Using this mixed method will allow teachers and students voice in the research, allowing the researcher to understand and validate the data.

**Type of Data to be Collected**

The quantitative data will be average grades for each essay writing assignment during the second semester. They will be compared to the average grades from students who use paper and pencil. Qualitative data will be collected using a survey, to be completed after each unit in the curriculum in the second semester. The format of this essay will be using Google forms currently in use by SCUCISD. The data will be collected from students who use the ePortfolio to complete their essays and those who do not, from the same teacher in different class periods. Teachers will be from both junior high schools in the school district.

**Measurement Instruments to be Used**

The quantitative data will be the average of each classroom using ePortfolios submitted essays versus paper and pencil essays. The data will be collected using TxConnect, the current gradebook in use by SCUCISD. Qualitative data will be a survey, from teachers, (enclosure 1) and students (enclosure 2), using the ePortfolio and students writing pen and paper essays. Data will be collected during the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year.

**How the Literature Review Informed the Study**

The literature review indicated that ePortfolios are being used in higher education, primarily in their first or second year in writing. There was no quantitative evidence in any of the research papers located to indicate if the assessment was a greater achievement over written assessments. Many studies were deemed inconclusive as there has been insufficient time to properly evaluate using ePortfolios as an assessment tool. Several studies indicated that the data excluded poor achieving students, others indicated that poor implementation and lack of student effort and/or lack of interest in ePortfolios made the data unreliable. I hope to avoid these pitfalls by having students and teachers in the study understand why using ePortfolios as an assessment tool will be beneficial for their education

**Timeline for Implementing the Plan**

2019-2020 school year.

* Pre-semester professional development: meet with potential eight grade ELA teachers during the PD period before school starts.
* First nine-week grading period: PD with teachers to develop the process for assessing increased achievement of ePortfolio essays versus paper and pencil essays.
* Second nine-week grading period: this nine-week period will be used as a trial period to implement assessing writing assignments to acclimatize teachers and students in the use of ePortfolios. Data collected at this point will be assessed and reviewed with teachers to verify uniformed assessment but will not be included in the research.
* Third and fourth grading periods: teachers will fully implement using ePortfolios for assessing writing assignments. Data will be collected for analysis during the summer months.

**Implementing the Plan**

PD is already scheduled to present the action research plan to educators at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year at SCUCISD. It is the desire that enough teachers volunteer their students to participate in the action research to more readily validate the data.

**Collect & Analyze the Data**

The quantitative data will be collected directly from TxConnect, the school district gradebook. The qualitative data will be collected at the end of each unit. Grades between the ePortfolios essays and the written essay will be compared to determine if using ePortfolios achieved greater writing success. The qualitative data will assess teachers and student’s reaction to using the ePortfolio as an assessment of essays.

**Develop the Action Plan**

The action plan will be developed in a collaboration of myself and volunteer teachers. The qualitative surveys will be agreed upon by a consensus and implemented during the second semester. The first grading period of the first semester will be a training period for teachers and the second grading period will be training for students to create and familiarize themselves with the ePortfolio.

**Sharing and Communicate the Results**

The results of the action research will be shared with participating ELA teachers, the ELA director, the district curriculum director as well as the full administration of the school district. After peer review, the paper will be submitted, potentially to be published.

**Reflect on the Process**

The course time frame of five weeks seemed a bit rushed to create the action plan; however, all planning must start somewhere, and I will now have the time to refine it as we continue to the capstone project. The plan may change and most likely will, before it is implemented in the spring of 2020. The largest hurdle I see is ensuring that I stay in the guideline of the variation selected in the mixed method design. Another will be having enough participants to make the comparison reliable. There has been a lot to gather in such a short period, yet here is the first step towards the end, publishing the research.

References:

Creswell, J. W. & Clark, V.L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (Third Edition), [Kindle e-Reader version]. [Retrieved from https://smile.amazon.com/Designing-Conducting-Mixed-Methods-Research-ebook/dp/B07CCG2JN6/ref=sr\_1\_6?keywords=creswell&qid=1562443056&s=gateway&sr=8-6](https://smile.amazon.com/Designing-Conducting-Mixed-Methods-Research-ebook/dp/B07CCG2JN6/ref=sr_1_6?keywords=creswell&qid=1562443056&s=gateway&sr=8-6)

Mertler, C.A. (2016). *Action research: improving schools and empowering educators* (Fifth Edition). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Enclosure 1 - Unit XX Teacher Survey

This data will be used in an action research conducted by Luis San Román, data will be anonymous and may be used in publication of the research.

\* Required

1. In comparing essays between pen and paper essays to ePortfolio submitted essays, was there a grade improvement? \*

Significantly lower

Lower

The same

Higher

Significantly higher

1. In comparing essays between pen and paper essays to ePortfolio submitted essays, was there a grammar improvement? \*

Significantly lower

Lower

The same

Higher

Significantly higher

1. In comparing essays between pen and paper essays to ePortfolio submitted essays, was there a content increase? \*

Significantly lower

Lower

The same

Higher

Significantly higher

Enclosure 1 - continued

1. In comparing essays between pen and paper essays to ePortfolio submitted essays, what was the ease of grading of the ePortfolio essays? \*

Significantly easy

Easy

The same

Harder

Significantly harder

1. What was your observation of student interest in ePortfolio essays? \*
2. What was your observation of student issues in ePortfolio essays? \*

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Enclosure 2 - Unit XX Student Survey

This data will be used in an action research conducted by Luis San Román, data will be anonymous and may be used in publication of the research.

\* Required

1. Comparing the ePortfolio essay to written essays, how did you find composing the ePortfolio essay?

Significantly easy

Easy

The same

Harder

Significantly harder

1. Did you find the ePortfolio essay easier or harder than writing an essay? 

Significantly easy

Easy

The same

Harder

Significantly harder

1. Comparing to your previous written essay, was your grade... \*

Higher

About the same

Lower

1. How do you feel about using ePortfolios to submit essays? 

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