

BUILDING electronic portfolios

Get to Know Me Better



Joey

IEP
RESOURCES

Susan J. Glor-Scheib

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Building Electronic Portfolios

By Susan J. Glor-Scheib

Edited by Elizabeth Ragsdale and Tom Kinney

Graphic design by Elizabeth Ragsdale

ISBN: 1-57861-588-7

An Attainment Publication

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Printed in the United States of America.



Attainment Company, Inc.

P.O. Box 930160

Verona, Wisconsin 53593-0160

1-800-327-4269

www.AttainmentCompany.com



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A typical goal for most secondary school students who have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is that they participate fully in IEP and transition planning. As educators, we try to provide experiences and opportunities for students to make choices and practice self-determination and self-advocacy. When the time comes to apply such skills, for example, at an IEP meeting in which transition plans are developed, we want students to make their voices heard and preferences known to the team. Certainly, helping students understand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the IEP process are critical pieces in helping them realize what is at stake and how self-determination and self-advocacy play a role. Furthermore, teaching students to participate in and even lead their own IEP meetings helps them develop important communication and self-advocacy skills.

The strategies presented in this manual suggest an additional route to achieving self-determination and self-advocacy, one



that uses an electronic portfolio (also known as an e-portfolio or a digital portfolio) to enhance a student's participation in IEP and transition planning. The e-portfolio is a planned, prepared, personalized statement communicated to the team members during the IEP meeting. For students who feel daunted by the thought of speaking in a room full of adults, the e-portfolio provides a means to communicate their ideas. What is included in the portfolio depends on the student. Those just beginning

Creating and presenting an e-portfolio at an IEP meeting demonstrates self-advocacy.

their participation in IEP and transition planning may have only a few slides that show images of job-related activities, accomplishments and other activities that they enjoy or that highlight their strengths. Students can create pages about home and

community life, schooling, job shadowing and work experiences, skills, interests, accomplishments, awards and anything else they may want to communicate to the team.

The skills of self-determination and self-advocacy are essential for success in adult life. As educators, we want students with disabilities to participate in the development and implementation of their IEPs, including involvement in their IEP and transition planning meetings. Creating and presenting an e-portfolio at an IEP meeting demonstrates self-advocacy. Making decisions about preferences and perceived strengths in the planning and preparation of the e-portfolio demonstrates self-determination. By showing an e-portfolio at the beginning of an IEP meeting, students ensure that their voices are heard, their preferences articulated and their strengths and interests brought before the team. The power of an e-portfolio lies in image, helping the team members "see" students as their future is considered and discussed. Every other member comes to the meeting with files, reports and varying forms of documentation. Why shouldn't the student be equally equipped?

Organization of the book

This manual provides background information on e-portfolios and outlines a step-by-step process for students and their teachers and families to develop an e-portfolio for presentation at IEP meetings. The manual is divided into three parts. **Part 1: Helping Students Make Electronic Portfolios** describes the functions of electronic

portfolios, explains their importance in IEP and transition planning, and provides guidelines for getting started.

Part 2: Making Your Electronic Portfolio contains a simple survey to help students think through different aspects of their lives to determine their portfolio contents, directions for developing their portfolio using presentation software, a process for presenting the portfolio at the IEP meeting and a method for updating the portfolio.

Part 3: Sample PLOPs and Electronic Portfolios shows examples of actual portfolios created by students at different stages of their educational experience. Each example includes a brief description of the student written as a PLOP (Present Levels of Performance). These portfolios were created either by the student or by a teacher or parent to communicate the student's skills, preferences, accomplishments and plans.

Who can use this book?

Any student who attends IEP and transition planning meetings should consider presenting an e-portfolio at the meeting. An e-portfolio ensures that the student's ideas are communicated to the team. Whether the portfolio is created by the student or by a teacher or parent, it ensures that the student's voice is heard with plans and preferences clearly articulated to the team.

Basic computer skills are needed to create an e-portfolio. Any presentation software like Microsoft PowerPoint, Lotus Freelance Graphics, Adobe Persuasions, Corel Presentations or Harvard Graphics can be used. Software programs are easy to learn and use; most have tutorials built right into the program. If the student or adult who creates the e-portfolio needs additional support, technical support and technical manuals may be available through the school. For the sake of clarity, this book shows only slides, not software palettes, tools and menus.

A reproducible survey form on pages 26–33 has been included for your convenience. The questions on the survey address many elements students should consider to function as independently as possible in late teen and early adult life. Students should be encouraged to respond to all items, either independently or with assistance, before starting their e-portfolios. They will have a clearer idea of strengths and preferences to include in their portfolios after they complete the survey.