

How to Build an Impressive Teaching Portfolio

Your portfolio is intended to showcase the best qualities of your teaching. It also provides evidence that you meet all of Lawrence's 13 program standards for teacher certification and licensure. You'll want to be selective and to provide clear commentary to build the case that you show great promise as a teacher. Here are some tips from an experienced portfolio evaluator.

General Tips

The Final Teaching Portfolio in LiveText is organized into pages set by the Lawrence template. You divide each page into sections with headings. Then you fill each section with something to show (a picture or document) and tell (a brief commentary). Finally, you attach *pdf* files as needed.

- **GOLDEN RULE:** Nothing goes in your portfolio without a comment! (What am I looking at? What does it show about your teaching?)
- **Triangulate:** Include lessons with different objectives, approaches, and activities. Show varied kinds of assessment: checkpoints, paper tests, and projects or performances with rubrics. (What range! What depth! You're hired!)
- **Illustrate:** Include a picture (*jpeg*) or visible document in every section to catch my eye. (It's worth a thousand words.)
- **Verbulate:** Provide context and highlight what you want me to notice. Be brief! Be specific! (A short paragraph does the trick.)
- **Attach the goods:**
 - Put items in order—lesson plan first, then materials called for in the plan. (Don't make me fish!)
 - Attach *pdf* files only—they open in LiveText and avoid hassles with other software. (Sorry you didn't get the job, but my Word 2003 couldn't open your *docx* file.) Insert your videoclips as *mov* files (and make sure they run on another computer!).
 - Protect identities—remove last names from student work. (No stalkers, please.)
- **Compress files:** Make sure scanned images (*jpeg*), documents (*pdf*), and video clips (*mov*) load quickly. (I don't have all day—I'll count to ten and hit "Escape.")

Tips for Specific Sections

Introduction

Who are you? Introduce yourself with a picture and paragraph. Include contact info.

What do you believe about teaching and learning? Describe your approach.

Student Teaching

Where did you do your student teaching? Set the scene with a picture and description. Tell me about the school (location, size, student body) and your teaching assignment.

Teaching Video

What are you like in the classroom? Provide a videoclip (*mov*) of yourself in action! Edit it like a sports highlight reel—2 to 3 minutes tops, cutting anything that drags or is more-of-the-same. Introduce the clip with a blurb and give the time length in parentheses (1:52). Make sure the video loads quickly over the internet and runs on another computer.

Lessons

What kinds of lessons do you plan? Show off your three best lessons, preferably of different kinds. Provide a catchy image and blurb for each. Attach the lesson plan and materials (in order) as *pdf* files.

Lesson Plan

Does your plan have clearly stated learning outcomes? Does it describe what students will do to achieve them? Does it indicate how you'll know they've been accomplished?

Activities

What kinds of activities do your students engage in? Show your range, from individual practice to group work to creative activities. Provide examples, each with a picture and blurb. Attach *pdf* files (no names, please).

Assessments

How do you assess student learning? Include everything from progress checks to paper-and-pencil tests to creative projects (with rubrics!). As before: picture, blurb, attached *pdf*.

Student Work

What kinds of wonderful things do your students create? Show pictures with blurbs. Provide context for each item and say how it demonstrates learning.

Related Activities

Extracurricular Activities: What other ways have you been involved with the students at the school? Include a picture and blurb for each item. [Omit this page if you have nothing compelling to put here.]

Work and Community Service: What else do you do that shows your abilities or community involvement? Include a picture and blurb for each item. [Again, omit if you have nothing to add.]

Reflective Essay

Attach your reflective essay as a *pdf* file. Make sure it addresses all the topics called for in the syllabus. Introduce the essay with a short statement (“Attached is an essay that describes...”).

Cooperating Teacher Evaluation

Ask the Education Department to scan your cooperating teacher’s final evaluation and e-mail you the *pdf* file. Attach the *pdf* with a short introduction. [This is a DPI requirement, so don’t omit it.]

Resume & Letters

Attach your professional resume as a wonderfully formatted *pdf* file, ready for printing. Introduce it with a short statement (“Attached is...”).

Attach a letter of recommendation (*pdf*) from your cooperating teacher. Add other letters if you have them—from professors, principals, other teachers, students, supervisors, etc. Introduce each with a blurb that says whom the letter is from and what it shows (perhaps quoting a key phrase or two).

Teaching Standards

Convince us that you meet or exceed each of Lawrence’s 13 program standards for teacher certification. For each standard, provide two indicators from separate sources—such as an observer’s letter (or evaluation) and a work sample in your portfolio—indicating where these can be found. For example:

- My cooperating teacher noted: “Lesson plans include frequent checks for understanding” (Cooperating Teacher Final Evaluation).
- I used a Ticket to Leave during the Blocks Lab to assess students’ understanding of the concept of conservation of momentum (“Blocks Lab” Lesson).

Everything you cite should be in your portfolio (lessons, cooperating teacher’s final evaluation, essay, recommendations) or in your department file (transcript, Praxis scores, other evaluations, etc.).

Once you’ve done everything on this page, have someone proofread your portfolio. Then submit! Be sure to do this right away to get your license without delay. (Bad rap lyrics, but good advice.)

– prepared by Bob Williams, Associate Professor of Education