



Project 39

Tasha Candela



Electronic Portfolios:
The Weebly Wonders of the Web

About Mrs. Candela

As an alumnus of [Central Michigan University](#), I have many reasons to be proud of my education. On December 17, 2005 I graduated cum laude with a major in Business Teacher Education, minor in English, and vocational certification in business services. I have furthered my knowledge base by obtaining my master's degree in Educational Technology in December 2008. Currently, I serve as a business teacher at [Lake Shore High School](#) teaching career/technology foundations, computer technology, advanced web design, web design, and word processing/publications courses. My online portfolio and model example for students can be visited at tashacandela.weebly.com; this site includes several graphics and downloadable samples of her work. In January 2011, I was named the Michigan Association Computer Users in Learning's [Outstanding Technology-Using Pre-K-12 Classroom Teacher of the Year](#). I have been published in ISTE's Leading and Learning with Technology magazine, MACUL's journal, highlighted in Scholastic's Best in Tech website, named a [PBS Innovative Educator](#), and a \$15,000 graduate scholarship award winner for my academic efforts and community involvement with the Michigan Council of Women in Technology. As an educator, I have proven to be an effective educational leader, have increased student achievement, positively impacted the school and community, integrated national and state standards and benchmarks within each lesson, and greatly contributed to the professional learning community both locally and globally. I love teaching, technology, and touching lives!

Knowledge Building & Critical Thinking

Everyone who has ever taken a shower has had an idea. It's the person who gets out of the shower, dries off, and does something about it that makes a difference. This phrase by Nolan Bushnell is every bit of true for my students. The idea was for students to take charge of this economy and show the world that they are knowledgeable, capable young professionals. Throughout this project, students had to critically think, problem solve, and make decisions. They accomplished this task by creating an electronic career portfolio on Weebly as a self-marketing tool to demonstrate interest and competence. Although in-class tutorials and a rubric facilitated the learning, students made personal choices and learned to build knowledge through higher-order thinking. As a Career and Technical Education course, it is imperative that students connect information to other academic disciplines. Writing business letters, exploratory interviews, and researching careers connected English Language Arts. Discussions on the affects of our economy, government strategies and reform to improve the market, and statistics from the Bureau of Labor statistics connected social studies. Completing college cost expenditure projections and a spreadsheet on career income and taxes connected to mathematics. Designing graphics and layout for the entire portfolio connected art. Students also demonstrated mastery of world of work benchmarks including the understanding of how a positive attitude can lead to success on the job, interpreting information using a variety of career assessments to identify career interest and abilities, applying technology by researching career options, preparing written materials necessary for job-hunting, and identifying methods of preparing for a job interview. This project aligns to the aligns to National Educational Technology Standards as well as Michigan's new high school reform curriculum that mandates an online learning experience. Eighty-nine percent of all students in this class found their portfolio to be extremely useful or very useful. Although this project is not a traditional bubble sheet assessment, students learned much more than a traditional test could possibly measure. Authentic assessment is truly the most important pedagogic teaching strategy in existence. These portfolios will be used by my students for the rest of their lives.

Learning Beyond the Classroom

Since the initiation of this project, this lesson has won a Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning \$1,500 grant and a portfolio partnership with two college professors at Central Michigan University and Oakland Community College has been formed. In addition, I have presented Electronic Portfolios: The Weebly Wonders of the Web at three state conferences and have received countless praise by staff members and students. Upperclassmen have credited their employment successes back to their Career/Technology Foundations class and the work of their electronic portfolio. The portfolio is proof of learning and can be used in all classrooms. Instead of an employment portfolio, districts could mandate all students to post work samples from each subject and grade level. Tracking progress is a critical part of learning. This data could serve as evidence that a student has obtained mastery of a concept. Moreover, many colleges have already made an electronic portfolio mandatory. My students will have exposure to one and will simply need to continue updating it as life progresses. Aside from these factors, students have gained personalized real world lessons. All students signed a letter to our governor outlining the affects of the economy, worries for their future, and shared a class-created video with him. They witnesses, first-hand, the power of social networking and developing a network to gain permission to use Five for Fighting's *100 Years*. It is imperative to model understanding of social, ethical, and legal issues and responsibilities related to digital culture. Since student portfolios are live on the web, students were given lessons on leaving a positive digital footprint. Hopefully, this experience will transfer to other places in their online life including Weebly. Both parents and employers gave positive feedback to students on this



portfolio project. They were highly impressed by the variety of skills showcased on their sites. Parents were asking students for interview feedback and portfolio insight. Because Weebly is in the cloud, students can continue to update it in future years. Exploratory interviews with students who wanted to pursue the same career field as the interviewee were completed as a way to measure appropriate fit. One of the most exciting outcomes of this lesson is on its way next year. I have been approved to organize a mock interview day where employers from the Saint Clair Shores community visit the school and spend a day talking with students about their expectations and walk through an entire interview experience. All students must become college and career ready. By continuing to update their portfolios and hone these skills, freshmen will certainly have successful futures ahead. Allowing authentic opportunities like this one is truly the hallmark of the teaching profession.

Collaboration

At first glance, it would seem difficult to collaborate on an employment portfolio. After all, professional documents are so personal, career choices were based on individual taste, and the job market is competitive. Gaining employment was our common goal and that factor made it easy to work together. A student-produced video called *Dear Fifteen Year Old Me* shows the world how hungry our students are for promising futures. Deep discussions on job searching techniques and ways to increase employability were highlights of the course. Three Chinese exchange students were placed in my class this year. A compare and contrast of their job market, career availability, school structure, and job-hunting techniques gave the class an unforgettable cultural perspective. Collaboration with our counseling department allowed students to create individual Educational Development Plans to map out future courses. Since this lesson applies beyond the classroom, students have helped their parents with their own employment materials. During Professional Learning Community time, I have shared how-to create a Weebly website for other classroom teachers. A community job application mall experiment was completed. Founder Dan Veltri, the Michigan Association of Computer Users in Learning's Executive Director Ric Wiltse, and the Michigan Department of Education's Manager of Educational Technology Barbara Fardell have all pitched in to sponsor this project by providing funding and other resources. With colleges taking this project idea and embedding it into their curriculum, guest speakers invited into our classroom, discussion board conversations, and teacher/peer/employer feedback, students have learned that there are no learning boundaries.

Technology

Standing out in the crowd is essential in a job interview. Employers will be judging you based on the content of your response, the color of your wardrobe, and of course, the design of your application materials. Portfolios are a necessary tool for every job interview. They provide evidence such as a resume, an award, or a work sample to back up in visuals what is said in words. Unfortunately, there's a problem with these traditional paper portfolios. First, they are not travel-friendly. As more papers are added, they become heavier, often discolor, and wrinkle with age. Another dilemma is that a paper portfolio does not stay overnight with employers. So if a hiring committee needed a second look at a candidate's credentials, they would have to rely on memory alone. With the importance of going green spreading in America, what a waste of paper every time a document is updated. It is clear that a multimedia, web-based collection works best for a world driven by technology. These digital works would be housed on individual Weebly web sites. This will be more meaningful to students because technology use will increase excitement for learning. Likewise, it will be more manageable to students because assignments can be updated with ease. This project used email, digital cameras, projection devices, spreadsheets, document formatting software, assessment tools, data warehousing systems, keyboarding shortcuts, blogging tools, collaboration tools, digital citizenship resources, digital tools for enhancing pictures, digital tools for creating an online presence, and video resources on a regular basis. Our main technology supports were Microsoft Office Suite to produce professional documents, Windows Live Movie Maker or PhotoStory 3 for the introduction videos, Weebly.com for hosting and site creation, Blackboard 9 as a content management system, and web 2.0 tools of Picnik for picture editing, Slideshare for hosting, and Vimeo for hosting. Through exposure to these tools, students learned how-to troubleshoot the applications and use them productively, and transfer the knowledge to other class projects. These ground-breaking tools provided engagement and a quality portfolio project that the traditional paper portfolio was not able to deliver.