

Student Growth Portfolios Q&A for School Leaders

Based on educator feedback, student growth portfolios have been developed to provide teachers in “non-tested” grades or subjects with a measure of student growth. During the 2016 legislative session, the General Assembly passed the [Pre-K Quality Act](#). One key component of this law is the requirement that **all districts that have a voluntary pre-K program (VPK) must utilize the state board-approved pre-K and kindergarten student growth portfolio models for evaluating pre-K and kindergarten teachers** (see T.C.A. §§ 49-6-103–49-6-110). This incentivizes professional learning for educators in those grades and helps to ensure that our youngest students are learning from high-quality instruction every day.

In response to feedback from districts, the department intentionally structured implementation so districts would have two years from the time the law was passed until the first set of portfolio evaluations would be used—which has provided time for districts and schools to plan, identify funding, and learn more. Over the course of this time, the department has provided districts with several resources and conducted hundreds of on-site visits, and this document answers many of the questions we have received during that time. There are also a variety of resources on the [TEAM website](#).

General Questions

1. What is a student growth portfolio model for pre-K and kindergarten, and how will it impact teachers?

The pre-K and kindergarten student growth portfolio model allows teachers to demonstrate students’ progress toward mastery of English language arts (ELA) and math standards. Teachers collect student work artifacts at two points in time (point A and point B) and select artifacts from differentiated groups of students to submit for review via an online platform; the entire collection of student work from one course would be considered one portfolio. Then, certified peer reviewers score student work based on a comprehensive scoring guide.

Implementation of a student growth portfolio model produces an individual growth score, which is used for the 35 percent student growth component of the teacher’s level of overall effectiveness (LOE); as a result, teachers implementing student growth portfolio models have an evaluation composite similar to that of “tested” teachers. Like all evaluations, the portfolio model is meant to be a tool to help educators reflect on their practice and use feedback to continue to improve.

2. What is the history of portfolio use in Tennessee?

Portfolios have been implemented in Tennessee since the 2011-12 school year when the fine arts portfolio was first piloted. Since that time, the use of student growth portfolios has notably increased.

3. What does the research around portfolios say?

Research conducted on the Tennessee portfolio model found that portfolio scores are well aligned to observation scores. In fact, teachers implementing portfolios had slightly higher observation scores than similar teachers not implementing portfolios, particularly in the areas of Activities and Materials,

Thinking, and Problem Solving. Roughly 50 percent of teachers who implemented portfolios received higher growth scores than they would have without the portfolio and about 20 percent received the same score. Additionally, teachers on the whole reported that portfolios were more appropriate and understandable as part of the evaluation process than any other measure, aside from classroom observations. For more details, read the department's report, [The Rise of Student Growth Portfolio Models in Tennessee](#).

4. What are the types of evidence that can be submitted in a portfolio?

Because the portfolio model documents student growth through student work artifacts, it is crucial that teachers submit the evidence that best captures student learning **in whichever format is most appropriate for a particular standard**. Video is **not** required for submission of ELA evidence for the Pre-k and kindergarten portfolio model.

When collecting student work artifacts for math collections, teachers should consider what the standard is asking the student to say, do, or think, and whether video is the best format with which to capture this.

When collecting student writing for the ELA collection, teachers are encouraged to begin with a student work sample that includes dictation (i.e., students say or read their drawing or writing aloud while the teacher writes down what is said). If a teacher feels that video or audio would enhance the demonstration of the reading comprehension component within the integrated writing artifact, a video or audio clip may also be submitted. For more, see p. 4 of the [Pre-K](#) and the [Kindergarten](#) Student Growth Portfolio Model Scoring Resource Guides and the virtual training called [Pre-K/K Student Growth Portfolio Scoring Rubric Guidance](#)

5. What steps can school leaders take to support teachers in portfolio implementation?

To support teachers with portfolio implementation, school leaders should utilize shared leadership practices to

- become familiar with portfolio resources on the [TEAM website](#)
- build teacher capacity around planning, instruction, and assessment in regards to Tennessee's academic standards and related portfolio scoring guides
- collaborate with teachers around student work artifacts and other forms of data to promote student achievement and growth
- lead teachers to develop and execute interventions to address learning needs of differentiated student groups
- systematically monitor progress or portfolio development and student growth and adjust planned strategies as needed
- build and sustain a culture focused on continuous improvement, such that teachers view portfolio implementation as an opportunity for professional learning and growth
- ensure observation feedback is focused on indicators that will maximize student growth in that classroom
- contact your district's portfolio or technology leads as needed

Scoring & Evaluation

6. Do teachers implementing portfolios still have to be observed?

Yes. Classroom observations constitute the 50 percent qualitative component for a portfolio teacher's LOE, while the portfolio serves as the 35 percent student growth component. The portfolio process is

strongly aligned with the instruction, planning, and environment domains of the TEAM rubric, which can lead to rich conversations in pre- and post-conferences.

7. *Can teachers select the pre-K and kindergarten growth portfolio model for the achievement measure?*

Student achievement measures are the basis for setting achievement targets that all students are expected to meet on summative assessments of grade-level or content standards. Because portfolio models provide a growth measure based on a subset of students for a subset of standards, they cannot be used as an achievement measure. However, it should be noted that the 3/4/5 override, outlined in state board policy 5.201, allows student growth data to be used in place of a teacher's achievement measure if it is a level 3, 4, or 5 and is greater than the achievement score.

8. *Does the 4/5 trump rule apply to portfolios?*

The portfolio score can be used to activate the 4/5 trump rule in districts that have opted into that flexibility. This rule allows teachers who score a level 4 or 5 on individual growth to use their individual growth score for the entirety of their overall LOE.

9. *What is purposeful sampling and what is the role of the school leader in this process?*

Purposeful sampling is the process by which teachers select the student work artifacts to submit for scoring in the portfolio. These student work artifacts are the best representation of growth from the differentiated group it represents. School leaders can support teachers in this process by discussing student work in post-conferences by considering how the differentiated groups of students met the outcome of the task. The more a school leader, instructional coach, or peer/colleague knows about the student work in another teacher's classroom, and the more collaboration that occurs in PLCs or other collaborative groups around that student work, the more likely the teacher is to value the work of the students and the process. The greatest message we can give is that the more a teacher reflects upon their differentiated instruction and its impact on student learning, then the more we are impacting the social, emotional, and academic growth of students.

10. *What is the process for teachers self-scoring their portfolios?*

Teacher self-scoring is one of many reflective components of the portfolio. Teachers score point A and point B student work artifacts using the scoring guide and task-based expectations. It is this scoring process which will inform purposeful sampling, which is the selection of students from each of the three differentiated groupings (emerging, proficient, and advanced). Other reflective components of the portfolio include evidence tagging, completion of the context form, and completion of the narrative.

11. *There seems to be a discrepancy between a standard and the scoring rubric in the Kindergarten ELA Reading Literature option 2 collection. The standard says "with prompting and support, students will orally identify characters, setting, and major events in a narrative." However, the Level 3 (at grade level) scoring guide says, "With prompting and support, students will identify two characters with one trait for each." Isn't identifying character traits a first grade standard?*

Rubrics are multi-dimensional sets of scoring guidelines that are used to provide consistency in evaluating student work. Because a trait is a distinguishing characteristic, the portfolio committee added the word trait to allow kindergarten students to distinguish between two characters in the text. The first grade standard says that students shall write words and use illustrations to "describe characters, settings, and major events in a story using key details." This expectation is more advanced than identifying a distinguishing trait.

12. Why is “with prompting and support” included in some proficiency levels on the scoring rubric but not on other proficiency levels.

For each standard, seven proficiency levels have been provided to describe a wide-range of student abilities. Proficiency level 3 represents the grade level standard. Often in early grades, the grade level standard will include “with prompting and support.” However, the expectation at proficiency levels 4 and 5 might be that prompting and support are no longer needed. Proficiency level 6 is reflective of the next grade level standard. Therefore, it is possible that “prompting and support” would be included in the standard for the next grade level.

Technology

13. What technology is required to implement portfolios? Is the district required to provide this technology?

Portfolios were designed to be implemented without an additional investment in technology. For teachers that choose to include video collections to demonstrate student growth, a variety of district-owned devices (e.g., tablets or video cameras) and low- or no-cost downloadable software have been used. Some districts have found tripods to be helpful.

The department provides the online platform for portfolio submissions at no cost to districts. District portfolio leads and district technology leads have been provided training on the platform and resources are available on the platform site and on the TEAM website.

Peer Review Process

14. Who scores the portfolio collections?

Portfolios are teacher developed and the collections of student work artifacts are teacher scored. As in year’s past, districts provide peer reviewers based on the number of portfolios they submit. In order to ensure equity, the state board approved policy to cap the number of peer reviewers at one per 10 portfolios in each content area. The department has communicated to districts the number of peer reviewers needed.

15. How are peer reviewers chosen?

Portfolio users have the opportunity to show interest in being a peer reviewer by clicking the “Apply to Be a Peer Reviewer” button on the portfolio platform. The department provides districts with a list of teachers who expressed this interest. Desired peer reviewer qualifications include the following:

- Three years teaching experience in the grade level or subject area
- Rich understanding of standards
- Familiarity with scoring student work
- Comfort using technology

16. What is the process for peer reviewer training and certification?

To ensure consistent messaging and to eliminate the need for travel, peer reviewers **participate in virtual training and must pass an online certification test.** Districts can schedule the virtual training for all reviewers or allow training to be completed at the convenience of the reviewer. The peer reviewers will be contacted individually with log-in information for this virtual training.

Training will occur near the April 15 portfolio submission deadline in order to maximize the transfer of training effects.

The certification test will require a peer reviewer to score student work artifacts representative of the artifacts that will be submitted in portfolios. All peer reviewers who accurately score the work submission will be certified as a peer reviewer for the subject or grade level. Peer reviewers who demonstrate exemplary abilities may qualify as executive peer reviewers.

Even though some districts may choose to designate the time and place for the peer reviewer training to occur in a group setting, it is important that **reviewers complete the virtual certification on an individual basis**. This will ensure that there is accurate data to demonstrate the competency and reliability of the peer reviewer.

17. *What is the timeline for peer reviewing?*

To ensure that portfolios are scored in a timely manner and to maximize the training transfer effects, peer reviewing is scheduled between April 23 and May 15, 2018. Your support of the peer review process is greatly valued. Please reach out to your district portfolio lead if you have any questions specific to the peer review process.

18. *There is no funding from the state to remunerate peer reviewers. How is this work incentivized?*

Because ensuring evaluation of teachers and providing professional development related to that evaluation is a district responsibility outlined in the VPK application, the use of VPK funds to compensate peer reviewers is allowable. Alternatively, Title II funds can also be used for this purpose, as the scoring process is a professional learning experience. Other practices that might incentivize peer review includes approving professional development points, providing release time for reviewers, stipends, recognition for leadership, and release from other obligations during the peer review work.

19. *Peer reviewers are apprehensive about assigning a growth score to a teacher. What is their role in assigning the growth score?*

Peer reviewers do not assign a growth score to a teacher. They are only responsible for scoring student work samples. Each peer reviewer will score the point A and point B samples for one portfolio collection. Ultimately, the scores of four peer reviewers are converted to a teacher effectiveness score within the portfolio platform.

20. *Who should I contact with questions?*

For any questions about the student growth portfolio models, please reach out to your district portfolio lead or contact Portfolio.Questions@tn.gov.