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Zip Sass and Spitfire: Understanding What Administrators Want to See in Art Teacher Candidate Portfolios

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In this qualitative inquiry, we explore administrator experiences and perspectives concerning art teacher candidate portfolios, specifically in their use for hiring. In an effort to inform teacher education curriculum and professional practices, we address the portfolio purpose, structure, and contents and attempt to gain insight into the digital - traditional format debate. Responses from administrators yielded three major themes overall: Organization and access, professional communication, and passion and purpose. Each theme is explored and implications are given for teacher education programs and any teacher considering the development of an administrator-friendly portfolio.

Keywords: Administrator perspectives, art teacher candidates, ePortfolios, hiring

In searching the body of literature concerning public school administrators' perceptions of teacher candidate portfolios, the researchers discovered that little was known about those perceptions or about art teacher candidate portfolios. While general suggestions could be deduced regarding the elements and format, it was unclear how that might change when considering individuals whose discipline is innately visual? Would the expectations change? Would the format itself take a more prominent role? This paper endeavored to better articulate what administrators—specifically those serving in Midwestern schools—expected, and wanted to see, in the portfolios that art teacher candidates provided during interviews for art-teacher positions. This information could potentially embolden teacher education programs to help their pre-service art teachers produce portfolios that are more relevant to the positions they are applying for. Building this bridge between the two groups could offer a broader consideration of the portfolio's audience, a closer connection between K-12 administration and teacher education, and a deeper understanding of the complexity of the art teacher candidate portfolio.

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This study examined administrators' experiences and preferences with art teacher candidates and their portfolios by asking: How did administrators perceive their interactions with traditional and digital portfolios when hiring art teachers? What things did administrators expect or wish to see when evaluating an art teacher candidate's portfolio? The needs and experiences of both K-12 administrators and art teacher candidates could be better understood through an investigation of the central artifact that initiates contact between the two: the teacher candidate portfolio. As one public-school administrator said during an interview for this study, "It is the first point at which we really understand who they are as a person, so the artifacts need to represent them not only as an artist, but as an educator for our school."

Literature Review

The focus on public school administrators' perspectives on candidate portfolios in the context of hiring teachers was an important and overarching theme for this study. The broad reach of this theme necessitated that it be interwoven throughout the literature review, but brought to light many other foundational themes. To fully develop the literature review, the researchers explored different types of portfolios, sought insights into their uses, determined the most common elements of portfolios, and poured over the criticisms and validations that beguiled the move to digitally formatted portfolios. Furthermore, they examined the digital format more closely because of the prevalence of its use,

appearance in multiple bodies of literature, and increased application within teacher education programs.

Types of Portfolios

There were several types of portfolios mentioned in the literature that pertained to the processes of teaching, learning, and teacher education. The focus of this study was geared toward digital portfolios within the context of teacher education, but could not be scrutinized without a wider perusal of the various types of portfolios which included traditional hardcopy formats. The researchers cast a wide net to cover a vast compendium of appropriate research from the literature and were able to pull in information regarding various kinds of portfolios with uses ranging from systematic to individualistic. Having determined that, "the nature and structure of the portfolio is tied to its purpose" (Fanning, 2008), the researchers chose to present these portfolio-types not to create more terminology in an already saturated area, but to bring cohesive understanding and synthesis to the core purpose and audience of portfolios in teacher education and specifically in art teacher education. Each general type of portfolio is explained below.

Learning-centered. Learning-centered portfolios focused on individual knowledge acquisition and feature evidence of growth or sustained work in a particular area. For students in a teacher education context, these portfolios could occur at various points in time. Fanning (2008) described a learning portfolio as a tool for presenting accomplished criteria and explained that each criterion was based on standards that were designed to help students work toward certification. Karsenti et al. (2014) portrayed learning-centered portfolios as documentations of a pre-service teacher's journey through her program highlighted by her accompanying personal reflections on that progress. Frunzeanu (2014) agreed, saying that, "the digital teaching portfolio becomes a highly meaningful and effective way to demonstrate to others the knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained in mastering the complex art and science of teaching" (p. 117). Concomitantly, Hartwick and Mason (2014) presented reflection as the primary impetus for creating a portfolio but raised concern that the typical audience for these portfolios was potential employers who may not have had time to review such extensive reflections. This point of tension was one of the primary targets of this study.

Employment-centered. An employment-centered portfolio was developed and used by its creator for the purpose of acquiring a job. These employment-centered portfolios, also referred to as hiring portfolios, displayed a candidate's artifacts with the goal of matching the contents of the portfolio to needs expressed by a school or hiring agency (Karsenti et al., 2008). This was a portfolio to show off attributes, criteria, and standard abilities within a given field. Whitworth, Deering et al. (2011) found that administrators expressed concerns that portfolios, when used for reflection, would not be an efficient tool for hiring. Hartwick's and Mason's (2014) work determined which specific additions would make a portfolio more attractive in the hiring process, and indicated that there was a difference between learning-centered and employment-centered portfolios. Fanning (2008) echoed an acknowledgment of this difference showing that anecdotal and reflective artifacts, while crucial to the learning-centered portfolio, became tedious and superfluous in an employment-centered portfolio. In Whitworth et al.'s (2011) study, one administrator suggested the use of a two-tiered portfolio for teacher candidates, through the creation of a hybrid or layered version of the learning-centered and employment-centered portfolios. This transition-ready feature of the teacher candidate portfolio needed to be part of the original portfolio creation for teacher educators, which stressed the focus for this study on audience, goals, and purpose.

Professional development-centered. Dietz (as cited in Fanning, 2008) spotlighted school leaders and the need for portfolios that highlighted their growth and development. Fanning discussed how professional portfolios allowed individuals to set goals, get input from colleagues, and engage in lifelong learning. According to Dietz, this format was intended to be a lifelong learning tool for the person who had created the portfolio. The idea was not to use such a portfolio to acquire a position, but to strengthen one's position once employed. The professional development-centered portfolio was a continuously developoing body of work that the creator referred to in self-reflection to determine whether or not she was progressing and growing as an educator. Dietz also indicated that these portfolios could serve as learning tools, shared between educators, to help and encourage one another to push themselves in their disciplines. Such professional portfolios also served as evaluative tools, set apart from the hiring practice (Hartwick and Mason, 2014; Nielsen, 2014).

Portfolios and assessment. Similar to Fanning's (2008) explanation of learning portfolios, Karsenti et al. (2014) described assessment portfolios as those that provided artifacts that met the criteria of a training program. Either formative or summative, the audience for

the portfolios was centered on meeting a set of standards. Karsenti et al. (2008) also described digital archives, wherein pre-service teachers dumped documents and assignments throughout their program with no concern for reflection or follow-up. This was often a data-gathering process for teacher education programs that were, in their best intentions, meant to serve the student themselves but often ended up being a dumping ground for data purposes only. Learning management systems like Chalk and Wire©, Blackboard©, and Taskstream© among others were incredibly useful digital tools for gathering data on student performance and program assessment, but as digital archive applications, they remained underdeveloped in terms of student-driven maintenance and use beyond the course or program they were built in. The literature indicated that these portfolio development programs were geared primarily toward documenting students' progress within a particular higher educational curricular paradigm (Komperda et al., 2016). Though such portfolio applications are useful compendiums of course work and documents, they are not built to support a student's endeavors to procure work after college.

The confusion or misinterpretation of these different types of portfolios, the audiences they targeted, and the time at which they should have been used seemed to be where research and education could have lent themselves to filling in the gaps and adding clarification to the purpose, intention, and use of different types of education portfolios. Zhou and Helms (2015) described a gap in the evidence identified by the administrator-participants for how teacher candidates were using portfolios. It became necessary to ask if our future teachers were being taught to present themselves intelligently, efficiently, and pointedly to specific audiences? Such training has become necessary for teacher education programs and should utilize the breadth of research highlighted above. The practice of using portfolios was "closely aligned with both constructivism and authentic assessment," and if used appropriately could, "empower teachers to take charge and have a more active voice in their evaluation" (Attinello et al., 2006, p. 134), and in their teaching.

Elements of a Digital Portfolio

The literature provided recommendations by teachers, researchers, and administrators about what elements were essential for teacher applicants to include in their digital portfolios. A comparison of the recommended portfolio elements across nine foundational articles—published over the span of a decade—demonstrated inconsistencies (see Table 1). Although many of the reviewed articles considered Professional Documents such as resumes, recommendation letters, teaching certificates, and other licenses to be foundational and crucial elements within the portfolio there was not a consensus on the *types* of elements to include. For example, Fanning (2008) and Theel (2001) emphasized representative visuals such as a creative cover and picture of the candidate working with children. Strohmeier (2010) identified artifacts including, examples of feedback, learning blogs, and wikis to be crucial, whereas Sullivan (2004) and Buffington (2011) did not. Additionally, several articles listed student work samples, evidence of classroom management, evidence of teaching, and sample assessments as critical artifacts to be included in an eportfolio (Buffington, 2011; Fanning, 2008; Sullivan, 2004).

In Table 1, the most often recurring elements of a pre-service teacher portfolio that were found within the reviewed literature were displayed.. Of the thirty-three articles found, only nine had direct indications of the components or elements that should be included in portfolios. Within that body of literature, only five elements were found repeatedly,

- Professional Documents (including re-sumes, cover letters, transcripts, etc…)
- Evidence of Teaching (including lesson plans, evidence of student work, teacher evaluations, etc…),
- Personal Work Examples (including writ-ten work and/or artwork),
- Evidence of Assessment (including devel-oped rubrics, formal assessments, and/or informal assessments), and
- Student Work Examples (including written work, artwork, and/or video of students working).

Evidence of Teaching was found to be of high importance within the literature. According to Sullivan (2015), this evidence would include artifacts depicting subject proficiency, strong classroom management, and variety of teaching styles that could be evinced through lesson plans and unit plans. Additionally, much of the literature ascribed significant importance to student and candidate work examples—a total of 77% when combined—which could include several different artifacts such as examples of completed student projects, process documentation of student projects, executed lesson plans, pertinent research or publications, (Buffington, 2011; Mosely, 2005; Strohmeier, 2010; Wolf & Dietz, 1998). Though others explained that the inclusion of such was frivolous and

seen as not very useful to hiring administrators (Fanning, 2008).

Many of the studies revealed that time was a crucial element from the perspective of administrators in regard to their use of portfolios for evaluating teacher candidates. As Mosely (2005) said, "Time is of the essence," when considering who would look at the portfolios. Sullivan (2015) and Fanning (2008) found that time constraints could dissuade administrators from putting much time or effort into reviewing or considering portfolios when hiring teachers.

Table 1
Literature on the Elements of a Portfolio

	Professional Documents	Evidence of Teaching	Personal Work Examples	Evidence of Assessment	Student Work Examples
Percentage of articles that relate to element	66%	66%	55%	33%	22%
Number of articles that relate to element	6	6	5	3	2
Rank order of importance	1	1	3	4	5

Note. Rank order determined by number of articles that make reference to that particular element.

Validations of the Digital Format

Contemporary research indicated that the use of paper or traditional portfolio formats was quickly becoming outdated. Current employers were more interested in portfolios that they could peruse at their leisure, which they could refer back to, and that contained a wider variety of information to draw from when making important hiring and promotional decisions. Concurrently, students and would-be employees appreciated not having to physically tote their life's work with them wherever they went. Digital access to that information made it much simpler to update, modify, and deliver to as many recipients as needed. Finally, the use of digital portfolios, instead of their paper-based counterparts, greatly expanded the potential content of a portfolio. This increase in the amount of information presentable was met with positive reactions from higher education faculty who appreciated the potential for student reflection, student capabilities, and increased communication of standards, philosophies, and experiences. The move from static, traditional career portfolios to dynamic and evolving digital portfolios seemed inevitable.

"The practice of preparing and submitting a paper-based résumé and cover letter in support of employment is becoming outmoded" (Garis, 2007, p. 3). Employers were looking for more information, a deeper understanding of the person behind the portfolio, and better representation of the caliber of work that person could produce. Digital portfolios had the ability to reveal a person's skills, accomplishments, planning, involvement, and work ethic to potential employers while also demonstrating a capacity for self-determination and reaction to criticism (p. 5). Diane Goldsmith (2007), the dean of planning, research, and assessment at the Connecticut Distance Learning Consortium explained that the digital format of these portfolios allowed them to be "genuine, easily available showcases for purposes outside the institution, such as job searches" (p. 36).

Willis and Wilkie (2009) explained that through the use of digital portfolios, students gained a deeper understanding of their own accomplishments and applicability to the job market than through traditional portfolio methods. This happened because they could see the entire picture, or body of work, that was produced electronically and could then make connections between the work they had included and the profession they intended to get into (pp. 74–75). Furthermore, the digital portfolio had proven to be quite flexible as an enterprising tool to reach a broader range of audiences (Goldsmith, 2007). This expanded understanding of the context for the work they had done allowed students to be better prepared for interview and work situations, to be metacognitive of the process of presenting one's self, and to consider how others viewed the information. Additionally, employers considered the digital portfolio to be an important tool for selecting employees because it allowed them to better know the employment candidates, caused them to stand out, and pinpointed the potential employee's skills (Whitworth et al., 2011). Relating specifically to art educators, Hsieh (2011) described digital portfolio use as being beneficial for

classroom content, showcasing student work, and encompassing other interactive possibilities.

As employer dispositions have leaned toward the acceptance and expectation for digital portfolios, so have those of instructors in the collegiate arena. Higher education has been impacted by digital portfolios at a profound level. In an article describing the perceptions toward portfolios, Whitworth et al. (2011), explained that:

> The advantages of electronic teaching portfolios noted by teacher education faculty were a variety of opportunities for students to reflect and learn, a better understanding on the part of students of the program's teaching standards, better access by faculty to student work, and increased communication with students (p. 96).

It was evident that digital portfolios created by students also played an important role in institutional accreditation and assessment as they were used to tie together, "learning, improvement, and accountability," as they related to institutional goals and benchmarks (Garis, 2007, p. 4). The data pooled from portfolios was used to determine the effectiveness of specific programs, the impact of curricular decisions, and the competency of the students receiving degrees from the institution being evaluated (p. 5).

Criticisms of Digital Portfolio Use

The literature on digital portfolios did express some criticisms about their development, use, and relevance for pre-service teachers as well as current teachers. Primarily, critics worried about the vast amount of time and work involved in the creation and maintenance of digital portfolios and the value that those portfolios retained after their creation. Additionally, there was concern that the training necessary for the evaluation of these portfolios was overwhelming and the constantly changing components and expectations made them—and evaluation training for them—obsolete soon after implementation.

The development of digital portfolios consumesd massive amounts of time. Pre-service teachers were hard pressed to design such portfolios in an effective, efficient, and professional manner without dozens of hours of training and preparation (Hofer, 2005; Winsor, et al., 1999). Similarly, instructors had to first learn software and methods for creating digital portfolios before attempting to teach techniques for their development. This was complicated by the ever-changing software and hardware requirements that necessitated constant and vigilant research into the topic. In an article regarding teacher preparation, Hofer (2005), explained that the incorporation of digital portfolios into teacher education programs would require that the program be systematically coordinated to give all affected educators similar experiences with portfolios. Moreover, the entire system in which these portfolios were implemented would need to have a unifying thematic approach to that development to ensure that all pre-service teachers would receive similar instruction and requirements for their portfolios. Finally, it would be necessary that all involved be part of an overarching vision for digital portfolios and their impact on teaching based on a substantive infrastructure of technological and personal support (Hofer, 2005). Any one of these tasks alone would be quite time consuming for those interested in teaching pre-service educators to create effective and useful digital portfolios, but the combination of these factors made it seem a daunting if not Sisyphean effort, calling into question whether or not the end justified the means.

Additionally et al. (2006) explained in their article on the value of teacher portfolios, that principles have traditionally perceived portfolios as doing "little to improve practice or instruction," and that they were little more than a "time-consuming charade" that produced, "little value to either the teachers or the schools in which they work" (p. 132). Their article illustrated the existing notions that digital portfolios were difficult to assess and that such assessments were often subjective, unstructured, and typically difficult to validate. This point of view was further confounded by a lack of solid data to indicate that digital portfolios provided demonstrative evidence of any actual teaching ability and as such did little to contribute to the developer's transition from student to practitioner (Attinello et al., 2006; Zhou & Helms, 2015).

Buffington's (2011) article directly addressed the development of art teacher candidate portfolios and indicated that 75% of the supervisors surveyed wanted traditional portfolios rather than digital:

> The reasons the supervisors offered for this included that they might not be able to have a computer or Internet access during the interview and that the use of technology may distract from the interview process. One supervisor indicated that, "Our interview committees are rather large and numbers of interviews are also significant. It is easier to pass around a portfolio than other options…" (p. 16).

Buffington later noted that 15% desired a website link from participants and 9% wanted the portfolio on a portable storage device. Because of these results, the

author suggested not replacing a traditional portfolio with a digital one, but using it as a supplement.

It was this movement toward a hybridized option that has guided this research toward a consideration of the most accessible, efficient, and informative portfolio options for art teacher candidates. It should be noted that even within the last five years, there have been several advances in digital portfolio applications and features. Students have been given more options within their teacher education programs and other courses for showcasing their work; and as the mobile device revolution continues, their uses will undoubtebly expand into the realm of pre-service teacher portfolios.

Methods

The present study followed a case-study qualitative research design approach (Creswell, 2008; Litchman, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). The case in the present study was characteristics of administrators hiring art teachers. The type of case-study selected was: Typical, as identified by Lichman (2013). The primary mode of data gathering was through phone interviews as well as an online survey containing 18 questions. The phone interview and survey questions were identical.

Participants

An email invitation was sent out to *n*=121 participants who were listed as building administrators on school and district websites in the researchers' Midwestern geographical regions. A total of 10 invitations were returned as undeliverable, 14 responded with an agreement to participate, and the remaining 97 requests were unanswered. This resulted in an 11.5% response rate. In the invitation it was stated that the researchers wanted to talk with individuals who played a role in the hiring of art teachers.

Participants in the study were *n*=14 school administrators in the Midwestern region of the U.S. All participants were directly involved in the interviewing and/or hiring of art teachers candidates. A total of 57% (*n*= 8) reported that they made the final decision in hiring art teachers while 43% (*n*= 6) said they were part of a hiring team.

Data Gathering Procedures

Those who agreed to participate were sent a follow-up email containing a link to the online consent form and options for the interview format (in-person, email, phone, Skype). A total of (*n*= 10) opted to be interviewed over the phone and the remaining (*n*= 4) filled out the online survey.

The interviews and survey consisted of 18 questions, eight of which were open ended (Creswell, 2008; see Appendix). The first four questions gathered basic logistical information (person's role in hiring art teachers, number of art teachers at the school, grades that their art teacher(s) taught, and whether or not art teacher(s) were encouraged to maintain a website) to get a sense of the participants' context, experience, and level of comfort with digital and traditional portfolio use in the hiring process. The remaining questions specifically regarded art teacher candidate portfolios. The interview also inquired about administrative preferences toward reviewing digital or traditional portfolios.

Administrators were asked to rate 12 elements of an art teacher candidate portfolio on a five-point scale (Useless, Unimportant, Moderately important, Important, and Extremely important). A total of 23 portfolio elements were identified in the literature review. The authors derived a list from nine core studies (Buffington, 2011; Fanning, 2008; Mosely, 2005; Strohmeier, 2010; Sullivan, 2004; Theel, 2001; Wolf & Dietz, 1998; Whitworth et. al, 2011; Zhou & Helms, 2015) of 12 essential or common teacher candidate portfolio elements.

All participants reported having at least one art teacher in their buildings. There was participant representation from all levels— elementary, middle, high school, as well as K-12 building principals. A total of 43% of the participants said they used portfolios in the hiring of art teachers. For those who did not, it was because they had never used portfolios before, portfolios were not required in the hiring of art teachers, or they had not hired an art teacher before.

While several of the questions were quantitative in nature and enabled us to report percentages on some issues, the bulk of the findings came from qualitative responses enabling rich, descriptive data. Interview notes were coded and analyzed for common themes in individual questions as well as overall to get a holistic sense of what administrators' common perspectives and experiences were with art teacher candidate portfolios.

Limitations of the Study

The study sample was small and introduced limitations to the findings. While many invitations were sent out, the 11.5% response rate did not provide a broad perspective. The invitations covered three different Midwestern geographic regions where the researchers

were located with the hope that familiarity to the region and its post-secondary connections might spur greater response in local administrators. There were also similar findings emerging between the literature review and this study's findings, which led researchers to believe that the descriptive data would add to an already developing and informative discourse concerning administrator perspectives on general teacher candidate portfolios. While this small study sample was not representative of all administrators, it could add to the discourse concerning portfolio use, general expectations from administrators, and introduce newer discourse concerning art teacher candidates, specifically.

Data Analysis

Data was gathered using two instruments; recorded phone interviews and an online survey. The same questions and sub-questions were presented in both mediums. Qualitative data were extracted from both instruments for coding. Analysis was further conducted by mining data from documents (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Merriam, 1998). Individually, each of the three researchers carefully reviewed the data which was then hand-coded by each of them through simple-coding, axial coding, and selective coding. As a result, strong themes emerged and working theories were put in place.

First, the open-coding analysis strategy as proposed by Creswell (2008) was used. The researchers began by establishing *simple codes* that expressed what the data indicated. The second step related to *axial coding* as recommended by Lichman (2013). Text was reviewed line-by-line to identify commonalities, categories, emerging ideas, and similar patterns. The third step used was *selective coding* to develop a working theory through pattern matching and explanation building analytic techniques recommended by Yin (2003) and Lichman (2013). To validate the coding, data were sorted and coded a second time and themes from the first open coding were then grouped. Finally, the research team met and discussed the emerged themes and identified the strongest themes among them.

Findings

The authors wanted to better understand administrators' experiences and preferences with traditional and digital portfolios in hiring art teachers and what they expected or wanted to see in an art teacher candidate's portfolio. For the purpose of this paper, the overall themes were explored instead of addressing each interview and survey question individually. This exploration began by addressing the digital-traditional divide and what the participants' preferences and experiences were regarding what they had seen in art teacher candidate portfolios. Then, a brief overview of what elements the participants found relevant to the art teacher candidate portfolio was analyzed. Finally, a description of each of the overall themes was presented to highlight the representative comments from participants which included organization and access, professional communication, and passion and purpose.

Digital or Traditional: The Debate Continues

Early in the interview, participants were asked to indicate if they had a preference for digital or traditional formats for art teacher candidate portfolios. Digital portfolios were preferred by 57% while 29% preferred traditional and 14% had no preference. When asked why, responses were similar to what was identified in the literature review. Comments regarding the preference for digital format inclduded:

- "It's not as cumbersome...can show im-agery...could quickly show something during an interview…,"
- "If they would put on their resume a link for access to their portfolio online, I think that ini-tial glimpse of what they're all about would be beneficial to them - especially in art and other hands-on classes,"
- "It's at my disposal. I don't have to shuffle pa-pers. It's organized, a time saver,"
- "[It's] quicker and I can get that information ahead of time,"
- "Traditional portfolios are cumbersome; there is the added process of returning it...,"
- "It can provide info not gleaned through the in-terview,"
- "It seems that a digital representation present prior to the interview would give me some talking points during the interview. Plus it would allow the candidate to carry/be burdened with lots of bulky visuals during the already stressful interview," and
- "Digital would be more helpful because it's readily available. It allows me to look at it when it works for me in my own time. It might help if I'm down to two candidates because I can review what I was thinking and what stands out."

Time and efficiency were often identified throughout the interviews. This should be of concern for those interested in catering to administrator needs. Others identified the bulkiness or cumbersomeness of a traditional portfolio and the added hassle of having to return something left with them. Interestingly, one participant used a similar sentiment for his argument for traditional portfolios, "digital gets cumbersome if doing [a] Skype™ interview," and "I like having that in my hands to look over." Another, who advocated for the traditional format said,

> With art, I want to see it in my hand for validity. Not that I don't trust candidates, but I'm pretty crafty with technology myself...Sometimes you get into the electronic piece and being able to read it is hindered by readability issues.

That administrator followed this statement saying that he believed pre-service teachers should be build a website and that he expected his own staff to have have websites. He also said, "if I want electronic copies of a teacher's resources, the first thing I'm going to do is look at their website." This response hinted at a hybrid approach where a website or digital format was available, but a traditional supplement was also provided. A few others concurred saying, "I actually would prefer both digital and traditional," and "I think the combination is important," but did not follow up their comments with any specific justifications.

Taking a lead from Hartwick and Mason (2014), we asked if participants would find videos helpful as part of the portfolio. Responses were overwhelmingly positive with a couple of caveats: they would need to be short and show some type of interaction and engagement with students. While Hartwick and Mason (2014) explored the use of introductory videos for portfolios, several of our participants described the importance and authenticity that could come from a video of instruction or engagement that included:

- "I would love a video of classroom instruc-tion,"
- "I'm not as concerned about what the teachers is doing as I am about the engagement of the students,"
- "It should encompass the students and how they are behaving and responding to the in-struction of the teacher," and
- "If students are working hard, the teacher is be-ing effective."

These responses indicate that a video could be a powerful tool to show teaching ability, Instead of describing it in an interview or writing about it on a piece of paper in a traditional portfolio. One participant said she would like the video to "show how they've fired pottery or done Raku." This implied that artistic ability and content knowledge could also be highlighted within a digital portfolio through the use of video.

While this study may not have uncovered any new arguments for digital or traditional formats, it does align with discourse concerning the movement toward digital portfolio use. The responses provided by administrators give this study a unique perspective into the thoughts, desires, and reservations that they have when reviewing portfolios and interviewing potential teachers. This insight has presented an opportunity for instructors and pre-service students to reconsider what is most important in the development of portfolios for employment. It has also given the researchers a cause and purpose for ongoing studies toward a format that might highlight the concerns and benefits of both *sides* of the traditional or digital debate, and create a hybrid process and structure.

Portfolio Elements for Art Teacher Candidates: More Than Just a Resume

Participants were given a list of portfolio elements that was based on components reported as necessary within the literature. They were then asked to rate the importance of each element on a scale of 1 (useless) to 5 (extremely important). None of the elements received a mean score of less than 3.500, which indicated that all of the described components held high importance to administrators tasked with the hiring of art teachers. Clearly, none of these elements should be overlooked by higher education faculty when teaching students to develop teacher portfolios; nor should they be overlooked by pre-service students who are looking to acquire that first teaching job. However, the differences and similarities between the literature review and this study have provide interesting insights into the distinctions that administrators make when evaluating pre-service art teachers' portfolios. The two highest scoring elements were the resume and teaching certificate, a finding which was consistent with the literature wherein professional documents were held in high regard (See Table 2). Moreover, the artist's statement and teaching philosophy also ranked highly in the study

while ranking fairly low in the literature. Overall however, the majority of the elements ranked similarly between the literature and the study (see Table 3 for exact differences).

Table 2
Administrator Preference for Portfolio Elements

	Total Score	Mean Score	Rank Order
Resume	67	4.786	1
Teaching Certificate	62	3.857	2
Artist's Statement	58	4.143	3
Teaching Philosophy	57	4.071	4
Reference Letters	55	3.929	5
Lesson Plans	54	3.500	6
Classroom Management Plan	53	3.786	7
Student Artwork	52	3.714	8
Transcripts	51	3.643	9
Behavior Management Plan	51	3.643	9
Personal Artwork	50	3.571	11
Sample Assessment	49	3.500	12

Table 3 shows the differences between the literature and the scores given by the participants for this study. To make this comparison, the elements scored in this study were divided into five categories akin to those found in the literature:

1. Professional Documents included the ele-ments resume, teaching certificate, tran-scripts, and teaching certificate,
2. Evidence of Teaching was based on the el-ements of lesson plans, behavior manage-ment plan, and classroom management Plan,
3. Evidence of Assessment was indicated through sample assessment,
4. Student Work Examples was covered by the element called student artwork, and
5. Personal Work Examples was comprised of the elements of teaching philosophy, artist's statement, and personal artwork.

In regard to the comparison of these, the largest discrepancy was in the Evidence of Teaching category as it ranked first in the literature and only third in this study. This small divergence may be attributed to the focus of the study on pre-service art teachers specifically, instead of teaching portfolios in general, as discussed in the literature. Also of note is the fact that the requirement of professional documents was found to be the most important set of elements in both this study and the literature, which solidifies their importance for pre-service visual art instructors as well as generalist disciplines.

Table 3
Comparison of Rank Order in the Literature to the Study

	Professional Documents	Evidence of Teaching	Evidence of Assessment	Student Work Examples	Personal Work Examples
Rank in Literature	1	1	4	5	3
Rank in Study	1	3	5	4	2
Difference	0	2	1	1	1

Organization and Access: "Keep it brief"

Organization was a central theme throughout all of the conversations with administrators. There was overwhelming agreement that a portfolio should be well organized and accessible. Words like *succinct*, *brief*, *snippets*, *tidy*, *clean*, and *concise* were prevalent throughout the interviews, regardless of the prompt. We found, similar to the literature, that administrators wanted information quickly, efficiently, and in a manner that serves the reality of an administrator's limited timeframe. They had plenty to say on this topic of efficiency. For instance, one candidate said of video use in portfolios that, "if I had a video from everybody I might not have the time to look at those. If I had 30 applicants for several positions I wouldn't have time for that." Another urged candidates to consider their audiences as they constructed their portfolios saying, "administrators and interview teams generally do not have much knowledge of the content area in which they are hiring." Another commented, "sometimes candidates overwhelm you with so much stuff. The structure of the portfolio was of utmost importance to administrators who saw the appropriate and well-thought-out organization of the elements within a portfolio as more accessible to a broader audience and an indication of future teaching behavior. The following comments by administrators highlighted this:

- "If it's something I can look at in short order because it's organized, it makes the process easier and tells me a lot about the person. I'm looking for minimum maintenance people who are self-guided and ask for help when they need it,"
- "You want something that is organized. What does the organization say about you as an educator? You need someone who is organized. It speaks to classroom management issues. This might be the number one thing now that I think about it," and
- "Teachers that are unorganized - a block schedule will kill them because you can't just hurry up and get to the end of the 45 minutes. Organizational skill is important for all staff."

Understanding the audience and the importance of organization was crucial for art teacher candidates, especially when the odds were stacked against them without having stepped foot into the interview. One administrator commented that:

> [It's] important for administration to know that you as an art teacher are very organized and timely. Sometimes art instructors, band instructors, [and] music instructors sometimes think differently and because of that, time schedules and deadlines don't mean as much to them. [I] want this demonstrated in their portfolios.

It was important for candidates to be aware that administrators' previous experiences with teachers and their portfolios will impact their judgments of the candidates and their documents. Audience again played a role and it was made clear that candidates should be aware of how their portfolios may be perceived by individuals outside of their own disciplines.

Professional Communication: Having "stage presence"

Professional communication, or "stage presence" as one administrator put it, was another major theme throughout the interviews and encompassed the ideas of quality, skill, and type of communication that administrators expected to see within art teacher candidates' portfolios. Administrators wanted to know that candidates would be professionals in everything they did, from writing and talking to parents and colleagues, to teaching in the classroom. The portfolio serves as an important first indicator of that as indicated by one administrator:

> How they write says a lot about how they will communicate with parents, newspapers...you want them to come across as eloquent and professional. They could be a real good teacher, but if I'm comparing teachers I want to see someone who can communicate effective with parents, kids, community.

He also noted that within each portfolio he was, "looking for variety, quality, and the applicant's ability to speak intelligently about the processes used." Several other comments surrounded the idea of proving to administrators that the candidates had the skills they claimed to have. Administrators wanted to see evidence of completeness, artistic skill, and instructional skills demonstrated through images of artwork, videos of art processes and instruction, lesson plans, and student work samples. Though this was a lot to expect from a pre-service teacher's portfolio, one administrator said it was important to show these individual strengths to provide administrators with information that helps them understand the sort of supports that a newly-hired teacher might need. Another administrator said that it is "more impressive to see kids' work" and how it tied into school-wide themes or other disciplines. Here, professionalism would be shown through integration and collaboration with other colleagues—all of which administrators said could be viewed in a portfolio. One

administrator also pointed out how a portfolio communicates advocacy; another professional quality important for art teachers. He said, "it's an advertisement for your program, what you do, and how it supports other programs and themes at the school." Another participant equated this mindset to what he called being "global in mindset," which he and other administrators saw as an important aspect of demonstrating a wide variety of skills and experiences that would be beneficial to the applicants' potential school and coworkers.

Administrators also explained that the portfolio acted as an initial form of professional communication. For example, there was an expectation that a candidate would cater to or target the school to which she was applying. Administrators valued this kind of communication because they wanted to find matches for the available positions in their schools. Administrators were looking for evidence that the candidate had put effort into knowing what the school wanted and needed in an art teacher. One administrator said:

> If they're coming to a rural school in the Midwest they need to understand that being part of the community means going to ballgames, going to one-act plays, decorating for homecoming, singing in the church choice, painting a mural downtown on the side of the grocery store. Being an artist you might get called to do those things. This could be demonstrated through community service and outreach.

This concept was not unique to art teachers, as all good teachers have an impact that reaches far outside the walls of their classrooms. Understanding this about a position was important, as one participant said, "I want you to know our school and what we're looking for," and another participant who wanted candidates that "had done their homework and put things in that we might be specifically interested in seeing." The same administrator later indicated an understanding that aligning a portfolio to each individual school that a candidate applied to would be rather difficult. Even so, administrator expectations remained high as one participant explained, "sometimes, when I get resumes, they say they want to work in [the city], but that's not good enough for me. [Candidates need] to have done homework, gotten on our website, to have knowledge of the school." He went on, saying that candidates should let administrators "know that you want to come to our school with intention. That we would not be something you've settled for." These comments from administrators were also indicative of a desire for unique candidates. Administrators wanted to see what the candidates "could bring to the table". As one administrator put it, "I want to know why you want to come here, and why you want to be an art teacher for me." It became evident that administrators were looking for the connection between uniqueness and passion for teaching.

Passion and Purpose: "A little moxy and zip in their steps"

According to one administrator, "Artists are often very passionate people." While this pointed to the fact that expectations were different for art teacher candidates than for candidates in other disciplines, it brought focus onto the third major theme of this study: passion and purpose. Administrators expected a lot from incoming candidate portfolios including a demonstration of passion and purpose for teaching. One administrator noted that the very act of bringing a portfolio to an interview in the first place, "shows they are passionate about it." Another echoed this notion by saying, "the portfolio is what will separate one candidate from another. If a candidate comes in with a portfolio it demonstrates their preparedness." However, another administrator noted that preparedness was not enough by itself, "they need to be proud and hungry. Want the job. I'd prefer to have to not hold the reins." Others shared similar insights regarding the presentation of the portfolio and the candidate themselves, saying that candidates should "be thorough and be proud; be willing to share the work they've done and the efforts they've put forward; share their excellence," that as administrators they "look for passion and the ability to communicate the passion. This is a great time to see and witness teaching as they explain their work to a group of "non-artists." There was another who said, "I want to know what you can do, make a difference, and why you want to be with kids." Finally, another administrator shared that, "art programs come and go for whatever reasons, if they [the candidates] don't advocate and push their passions who else is going to do that for them?" These administrators expecteded a high level of confidence and assertiveness to be displayed within the art teacher candidates' portfolios. One said, "don't be afraid to share it. If a school district doesn't ask for it, bring it anyway as it will set you apart from everyone else." Similarly, another said that candidates need to be "more aggressive with presenting the portfolio —many times I have to ask if that is what the binder or case is—it is never presented as part of the interview."

Many of the statements above pertained to the interview process as well as the portfolio. In the conversation concerning art teacher candidate portfolios for the hiring process, it was inevitable that a discussion of the interview process blended in. Many of the participants

inadvertently shifted from talking about aspects of the art teacher candidate portfolio to how the candidate should present himself during the interview. The fluid intertwining of portfolios and interviews found in the dialogue of the administrators should be cause to deeply consider the impact of the portfolio as a hiring tool. It was a step in the larger process of hiring that should be made more familiar to pre-service students of all disciplines. Though the portfolio was crucial in that process, its presentation, use, and evolution were part of a much larger picture of the hiring experience and its preparation.

Discussion

It was important to note that expectations could differ between those applying for art teaching positions and positions in other disciplines. According to one administrator, "of the teaching positions, the art teacher's portfolio is probably the most important, to see what their strengths or skills are." Another participant recalled the last time she had hired an art teacher and said, "I hired the only one who brought a portfolio...I could see that she had the skills." Another administrator concurred:

> If I was hiring an art instructor...it would be critical to see the work that the person has done. It would make a huge impact on who I would hire. You want to see their skills. You can see proof of their abilities.

This notion was reiterated by an administrator who said:

> I think that particularly an art teacher can demonstrate much about her artistic and teaching abilities by using a portfolio as a tool. Since art deals with visual media, the use of a portfolio enhances the interview and tells much about passions, interests, and abilities.

Although art teacher candidates were prime examples for whom digital portfolios might serve, the implications of this study reach beyond disciplinary boundaries. One administrator noted that this study, "could lead the way in other areas. Art is not that different." Administrators were looking for indicators of excellence with expectations that were not bound by an isolated content area. Teaching was its own art and providing evidence of excellent teaching could be a complicated and arduous process regardless of content area.

In this study, the majority of the administrators that were surveyed favored the digital format. They found it to be more organized, convenient, and less cumbersome. They also found validity in the inclusion of videos that might display candidate prowess in the classroom or artistic ability. Additionally, those whom questioned the validity and readability of the digital format were in the minority. The participants were asked about the possibility of a hybrid structure that might serve both sides of the *divide* and cater to what previous literature had indicated and what the participants had experienced. There was also an exploration into what administrators believed should be included in art teacher candidate portfolios, with the most popular being resumes, official documents, lesson plans, behavior/classroom management plans, teaching philosophies, and artwork. This study also described three overall themes from the interviews: organization and access, professional communication, and passion and purpose. Each of these provided insights into what administrators expect from art teacher candidate portfolios as well as the entangled nature of the portfolio and the interview process.

Where do we go from here? Based on this study, there are several important tasks ahead. First, teacher educators need to rethink how portfolio development and purpose is being taught in their pre-service programs. Part of this is recognizing the different types of portfolios that exist and how each type serves developing teachers at different points. Another concern is encouraging the use of technology throughout the teacher education process to reduce the need to train candidates to use digital portfolio tools. Teacher educators must better prepare pre-service students throughout their programs to adapt to current technologies and to create more holistic, accessible products that speak to wider audiences. Art teacher candidates, specifically, are more subject to visual needs and expectations, so they should have an informed curriculum in place to prepare them to create quality portfolios relevant to their future careers. Pre-service teachers need to understand the difference between a growth-centered portfolio and an employment-centered portfolio—each with its own audience and purpose. This also means helping upcoming teacher candidates understand the extreme time constraints that administrators work in. They must also be taught to streamline the design and accessibility of their portfolios to accommodate those whom are tasked with reviewing them.

The digital portfolio is an unavoidable factor in how candidates see, present, and sell themselves in interview and hiring situations. The better they prepare their portfolios to serve diverse audiences and viewers (teacher educators, administers, colleagues, students, parents, etc.), the clearer their messages become and

the more effective they can be before and during the interview process. They also become more prepared to assess their own accomplishments and provide solid evidence of their professionalism.

Conclusion: Tradigitopia?

While this study found similarities between previous studies on the topic and participant administrator perspectives, it also uncovered a needed discourse concerning art teacher candidate portfolios, specifically. This work reiterated the growing dominance and preference for the digital over traditional format and the growing predilection toward the use of digital portfolios. Although there are still positive and negative components to each format, it would behoove instructors, students, and pre-service educators to acknowledge the audience for which these portfolios are being created and to develop portfolios that pertain to the most desirable qualities of each format. Creators of these portfolios should honor the need for efficient and well-organized platforms, consider accessibility, highlight professional communication, and demonstrate both passion and purpose within them. Instructors and students also need to be aware that administrators consider the portfolio to be a part of the hiring process that is often just as important as the interview itself. Though the portfolio does not replace a successful candidate interview, it is part of the professional communication required between both parties. As such, the pre-service portfolio's design and construction should be carefully considered and this study outlines the elements that many administrators consider most important including, Professional Documents, Evidence of Teaching, Personal Work Examples, Evidence of Assessment, and Student Work Examples.

Teacher educators must facilitate the transition between different types of digital portfolios and create ongoing curriculum highlighting their use. Understanding the multiplicity of portfolio types and formats, teacher educators need to be aware of what audiences these portfolios can and should serve. Moreover, the curriculum should move toward portfolio innovation, supporting new generations of teachers in creating a succinct and efficient message that considers multiple stakeholders. This shift toward administrator-friendly portfolios could offer individuals involved in the hiring of art teachers an opportunity to spend more focused time on getting to know a candidate through relevant, quality information, rather than sifting through the archives of a teacher candidate's outdated portfolio. The result could be a more productive hiring experience on both ends that is rich with conversation enhanced by readily available and highly desired artifacts.

Movement toward this ideal is what we are calling, tradigitopia. It considers a hybrid approach wherein traditional portfolio supplements can provide the validity and security needed by administrators through a digital mainframe that can provide the convenience, access, and multimedia elements they desire. We do not know if this utopian idea making use of both traditional and digital elements can satisfy the needs of all administrators, but it moves in a progressive direction. Technology evolves continually, and a teacher's ability to move along with it begins with how they present themselves when hired. Will they be forward thinking? Will they take risks? This will carry into their careers and how they continue to document their own professional development and their students' growth.

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Appendix

Interview/survey questions for administrators

1. What role do you play in the hiring of art teachers?
2. How many art teachers are in your school?
3. What grades do your art teachers teacher?
4. Are art teachers encouraged to maintain a website in your school?
5. If yes, what are the websites for? (If no, mark n/a)
6. Do you use portfolios in the hiring of art teachers?
7. If yes, when are they used? (check all that apply)
8. Have you ever reviewed a digital portfolio (online, CD, flash drive) when hiring an art teacher?
9. What is your preference in format for art teacher candidate portfolios?
10. Please describe why you prefer that portfolio format.
11. Please mark the importance you place on the following items for an art teacher candidate portfolio: (Useless, Unimportant, Moderately important, Important, Extremely important)
    a. Resume
    b. Reference letters
    c. Transcripts
    d. Teacher certificate
    e. Lesson plans
    f. Sample assessments
    g. Behavior management plan
    h. Classroom management plan
    i. Teacher philosophy
    j. Artist Statement
    k. Personal artwork
    l. Student artwork
12. What other items would you add to the list?
13. Would you find videos helpful as part of a portfolio? If yes, for what?
14. Please describe the MOST impressive art teacher portfolio you've ever seen.
15. Please describe the LEAST impressive art teacher portfolio you've ever seen.
16. What suggestions do you have for art teacher candidates concerning their portfolio?
17. How do you think the portfolio could be a more useful tool for administrators/others in hiring art teachers?
18. Is there anything else you'd like to say about art teacher candidate portfolios?