ePortfolios at Albany Senior High School
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Vision and values, and how they fit with the use of eportfolios (http://ashs.school.nz)

So we will start off with a bit of background of the school, as many of you know we are a new senior high school, the country's first state funded senior high school. We opened last year with 230 students. We have moved into a beautiful building in Auckland this year. We now have 450 students at year 11 and 12.

So what Miranda and I, and Barbara Cavanagh the principal, and Colleen Maguiness the third DP, did right at the start of the process was to begin to develop a vision and a set of values that was core to everything we do. You can see them on our website, the vision is that we nurture, we inspire, we empower each other to achieve highly and become good citizens. Several of the people in this room actually contributed to that process. We did a lot of research and a lot of thinking, a lot of talking, a lot of discussing and debating before we arrived at this vision and values. Everything we do comes out of this vision it is all heading to achieving this vision. So the assessment practices such as the use of eportfolios comes back to this vision so you will hear us referring back to it often.

So if you look at the set of values that we have many of these align with eportfolios. It didn't take much reading around assessment and portfolio based assessment to realise that if we were to achieve or to hold true to these values we would need to move away from a focus on summative assessment, the one of assessment in class where the student completes it and that is all that happens. We needed more emphasis on formative assessment and on diagnostic assessment and assessment of prior learning. And increasingly we looked to eportfolios as a way for us to achieve that.

If a student is bringing a portfolio to us as a school from our contributing junior high that is a wonderful artefact for us to get to know those students to hear the stories that sit around those artefacts, to assess their prior learning. Nuthall says that in any class that you are attempting to teach, if they got their heads together and talked to each other, they collectively would probably know 40 % of what you are about to teach them. Using eportfolios as students come into our school is really helpful for us to unlock that learning and that prior knowledge. So that is probably the first thing that we need to say.

These values, many of them lift off the page when you start thinking about eportfolios. **Excellence in all that we do** – that constant iterative striving for excellence, that nothing is ever finished. Somebody said that great writers never finish a novel, they abandon it. You are constantly improving it constantly

iterating until you finally have enough and you abandon it. That is very much the vision that we have for assessment and for learning in our school.

Warm mutually respectful relationships – as I will show you in a minute, social networking is built into the eportfolio system that we use. We use an open source eportfolio system called Mahara it is of course the Māori word to think, and thinking is the key goal for the use of that eportfolio. It is not simply a shop window where you put up and say this is what I've done, thinking is involved in that process of constructing the eportfolio, reflecting on it and cultivating the story and the ideas around that portfolio.

The social networking allows students to use the tools of Facebook and use that idea of 'friending' someone, to use that phrase, you friend someone, they become your friend and then you create groups of friends. Once you've got that social interaction, you've then got a really powerful vehicle for engaging in conversations and feedback with those different people. The friends are in fact teachers at our school, tutors, other students and soon family and whānau. I will tell you a bit more about the next steps for us in eportfolios. That is probably the other thing to say, in the eportfolio style, everything that we are doing is iterative. Our use of eportfolios is constantly under review and reflection and we are removing things and adding new things in, in that spirit of formative assessment. We are not saying this is the way it should be done, we are learning, we're on a journey and this is where we are at so far.

The families as part of our learning community – one of the next steps for us is that we are reviewing and changing our assessment and progress reporting this year. We are moving right away from paper reports. People have the ability to have a paper report generated and printed, but what we're doing is a three pronged approach to hopefully keep families more informed in the learning that's going on. The first is what we call a learning dialogue, that's a three way conference led by the student where they invite parents in, host parents in our space and take parents through what they've been learning, the challenges and successes that they've had in each one of their subjects and to also involve the tutor in that process. So the student actually hosts that three way conversation. That's the first thing that we're doing.

The second thing that we're doing is using the eportfolio so at that learning dialogue the parent will be given the URL of the student's eportfolio, either emailed to them or given to them on paper so that they can then carry on that conversation. The student will be using the eportfolio as a prompt if you like, for that learning dialogue, that learning conversation, this is what I'm doing in PE this is what I'm doing in science.

And the third thing that we're doing is making use of a parental portal and Paul has helped us enormously to get that set up. So parent's using a username and password can go in and see the live assessment data that we have for their students. So they can go in on the day that assessment is marked and that grade is allocated to the student, the parent can log in and see it. So rather than waiting six months for the progress and achievement report to come out before you can

celebrate or have conversations about that assessment it is real time and it is live and it is designed to fit in with that face to face conversation the ongoing social networking side of the eportfolio to help promote student assessment, student achievement.

Openness honesty and trust about sharing the learning rather than keeping it secret. The student just putting it in a manila folder and it never seeing the light of day again. Being open about your learning, saying this is my challenge, this is my success, and give me feedback on it.

Learning together and making decisions together – As you will see, feedback is a really important part of eportfolios. The eportfolio system that we use is built on Mahara but it is actually a Ministry provided site, myportfolio.school.nz, it is free for all schools in New Zealand to use and we've got dozens of schools who are using that actively. The feedback form is at the bottom of every eportfolio. That feedback and that dialogue between people who are invited to view an eportfolio and the student who has presented it, who has put it together, is absolutely vital.

Using evidence and reflection to make decisions – As you can see all of these values are really closely aligned to eportfolios so it was obvious to us that eportfolios would be a really important part of our assessment landscape if you like.