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Building Reflective Practices: ePortfolios as Tools for Sustained Professional Development in Online Literacy Instruction

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The article analyzes seven ePortfolios in a certification program to examine ways in which portfolios benefit faculty and staff professional development. The Global Society of Online Literacy Educators (GSOLE) is one organization offering online literacy instruction certification; the organization was founded to give instructors opportunities to engage in theory-to-practice conversations about the design of online reading and writing courses. The analysis reveals themes of intentional online pedagogical design, inclusive practices, application of online writing instruction theory, and integration of teaching technologies into the online classroom. Findings highlight the importance of structured, reflective professional development programs that foster community and support continuous growth over time with ePortfolios being an effective fit for sustaining development. Systematic forms of process-focused professional development can support reflective practices and integrative portfolio thinking, and such models serve as a contrast to self-paced professional development approaches.

Despite decades of ePortfolio research validating benefits on student learning, growth, and academic development, ePortfolios and their use in faculty and staff professional development contexts is still being explored. Literature in this area focuses on tenure and evaluation repository-style portfolios (Hoekstra & Crocker, 2015; McColgan & Blackwood, 2009; Seldin et al., 2010), class instructional portfolios (Bhika et al., 2013), and the use of ePortfolios with student-teachers (Granberg, 2010) more so than how ePortfolios might inform professional development for full-time instructors and staff. Likewise, educational development has not fully explored roles ePortfolios might play in sustained professional development, with many centers for teaching and learning continuing to favor quick and efficient one-off opportunities, such as webinars, workshops, and self-paced, completion-focused online modules that accommodate limitations in faculty and staff availability, labor, and time (Marquita et al., 2015). Sustained professional development opportunities, however, can allow faculty and staff to apply their learning to local policies and exigences and reflect across time, which can be especially important for faculty teaching heavy loads. ePortfolios can support this sustained work, particularly for online educators. Identifying avenues for development opportunities among online educators is especially consequential because they are more likely to hold contingent and part-time positions, and such practitioners are less likely to have access to on-campus professional development funding and support (Anderson, 2007; Baik et al., 2018). The online literacy certification program discussed in this article offers an illustrative example of such sustained professional development programming with ePortfolios serving an important role in participant learning and growth.

As readers of the *International Journal of ePortfolio* know, ePortfolios have the potential to offer reflective and process-oriented learning experiences conducive to meaningful professional development because they foster identity formation, the integration and application of knowledge, and sustained growth over time (Seldin et al., 2010). Such benefits for students have potential for faculty and staff as well (Caldwell et al., 2017). Further, ePortfolios can bridge professional development with practice, linking teaching theories with local application through the creation of artifacts. However, more research is needed to understand whether and how ePortfolios might enhance development practices for faculty and staff outside the tenure and evaluation process.

This article presents a case study of ePortfolios created by seven participants in the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators' (GSOLE) eight-month, asynchronous professional certification program for online literacy instruction (OLI). By studying these ePortfolios, we hoped to gain a deeper understanding of participant experiences in the certification program. Through descriptive data analysis in this article, we highlight ways in which ePortfolios can align with sustained, integrative, locally applicable, and reflective professional development for online literacy instructor (OLI) participants. We begin by exploring existing connections between online professional development and ePortfolios in the literature. Following a brief methods section, we highlight how faculty and staff ePortfolios in the certification program illustrated strengths related to participants' emerging OLI conceptual knowledge and their ability to reflect on applying that theoretical knowledge in local contexts. We also recognize the limited appearance of identity

formation in these ePortfolios, which is an impactful finding given the emphasis on identity formation in literature discussing student ePortfolio practices. We conclude with implications for educational developers and writing program administrators interested in developing professional development with ePortfolios.

Literature Review

Before sharing our findings, we situate this project within the contexts of online literacy instructor preparation and professional development and ePortfolio scholarship. For students, scholarship has shown ePortfolios can serve as dynamic digital spaces for showcasing learning artifacts and connecting academic experiences to career goals through reflection. For faculty and staff, however, the value of ePortfolios as professional development tools remains uneven, often limited to repository-style formats used for tenure and promotion.

Online Literacy Instruction

GSOLE's decision to build its professional development around a capstone ePortfolio responds to gaps left in the professional development opportunities online writing faculty can usually access. These are often local instructional technology workshops that focus on the mechanics of specific applications, or for-profit certification courses that teach faculty how to present their course material online. While these experiences can offer faculty some new strategies, they often focus too broadly on online instruction rather than engaging with the specific literacy demands of online writing instruction; thus, participants may have to retrofit what they learn to meet the needs of their curricula. Hewett and Ehmann (2004) and Rice (2015) proposed frameworks that literacy programs and individual literacy instructors can adopt to prepare for online teaching. Similarly, Bartolotta et al. (2023), Bourelle et al. (2015), Egger (2023), and Melonçon (2017) described specific OLI-focused professional development designs—sometimes grounded in specific theoretical frameworks—that support local, and often vulnerable, faculty, like contingent instructors and graduate students. Because these models were designed either as workshops, a workshop series, or a graduate seminar, they either did not require participants to create final deliverables or participants were required to produce a term project. But ePortfolios were never this final deliverable. GSOLE believed that graduate courses like those described by Bourelle at al. (2015) and Egger (2023) provided good models for learning theories of OLI but chose ePortfolios as the final deliverable to demonstrate participants' overall learning.

Within the context of OLI, specifically, student ePortfolios can respond to common challenges associated with asynchronous online learning, such as maintaining engagement, providing timely feedback, and ensuring equitable access to technology by fostering student autonomy, enabling diverse modes of expression, and facilitating ongoing reflection and assessment (CCCC Committee for Best Practices in Online Writing Instruction, 2013; GSOLE, 2019). For instance, ePortfolios can showcase a range of multimodal artifacts, such as written texts, videos, and interactive projects, demonstrating competencies across different communication forms. Scholars in online writing instruction and online teaching and learning have long advocated for greater understanding of how to enhance effective online teaching practices to increase student retention (Harris & McCloud, 2015), learning (Litterio, 2018), and success in online courses (Borgman & Dockter, 2018; Greer & Harris, 2018).

ePortfolios

Key studies on ePortfolio construction, presentation, and assessment underscore the value of ePortfolios, especially how they facilitate reflective processes and leverage digital affordances to link conceptual knowledge to application and practice (Paulson & Paulson, 1991; Wills & Rice, 2013; Yancey, 1999). Although the benefits of ePortfolios for students and graduate-level student-professional preparation are well documented, their implementation among faculty and staff remains predominantly limited to repository-style portfolios used for promotion and tenure, formats that often lack emphasis on reflection and integrative learning.

The existing ePortfolio scholarship identified three types of ePortfolios—learning, showcase, and assessment (Caldwell et al., 2017). Learning ePortfolios help students "reflect on and connect learning across academic and co-curricular learning experiences," and often feature artifacts that illustrate learning processes (Eynon et al., 2014, p. 98). Showcase ePortfolios, meanwhile, can help students bridge their academic experiences with the development of employable skills, helping them construct their digital professional identities (Cordie et al., 2019). Finally, assessment portfolios are used to evaluate how well student learning artifacts show the completion of programmatic or institutional learning outcomes. Across these types, Eynon et al.'s (2014) study of 24 institutions participating in the Connect to Learn (C2L) network found that ePortfolio artifacts not only made learning more visible but also catalyzed deeper, more intentional reflection. Such reflection enabled students to connect disparate learning experiences, identify strengths and areas for growth, and relate academic work to co-curricular engagement and professional standards. Research supporting the efficacy of ePortfolios to

support reflective and meaningful learning has caused the AAC&U to name ePortfolios a high-impact practice (Watson et al., 2016).

ePortfolios, particularly professional or showcase ePortfolios, serve as valuable tools for demonstrating practical skills and professional readiness, aligning academic work with industry expectations (Cordie et al., 2019). Because professional ePortfolios provide a space for showcasing connections between academic experiences and career goals and skills, Cordie et al. (2019) linked them to the demonstration of career readiness. One of their conclusions of graduate student ePortfolio use in three different programs was that "best practice ePortfolio work requires support across time as authentic learning requires intense revision and reflection" (p. 24). Especially in professional contexts like certification courses, providing time to prepare and deeply engage with course material is necessary for developing the kinds of reflection and engagement needed to communicate a public-facing professional identity. The use of ePortfolios in graduate programs, particularly within education and healthcare contexts, has likewise emphasized that ePortfolios can support professional training, aligning licensure or certification standards with reflective practice, competency documentation, and identity development (Kirby et al., 2023; McLean & Bullard, 2000).

In contrast to the large body of scholarship documenting how students benefit from ePortfolio development, less explored is how full-time instructors and staff can benefit from ePortfolios. In the literature, experiences are often linked to what faculty can learn from assessing student ePortfolios rather than benefits of these individuals developing portfolios themselves (Bhika et al., 2013; Carpenter et al., 2018; Karkowski et al., 2023; Marshall et al., 2017; Torre, 2019). Takayoshi and Selfe (2007), for example, noted that reviewing student ePortfolios benefits instructors as ePortfolio assessment can help educators think critically about their work and its presentation. Belanoff and Dickson (1991) linked portfolio assessment to community and collaboration, noting that assessment settings can offer a kind of professional training for faculty and staff and combating teacher isolation. Because ePortfolios have the potential of making "learning visible" and "support[ing] reflection, social pedagogy, and deep learning" (Eynon et al., 2014, p. 95), we believe just as they support student learning, they can support also instructors and staff completing professional development programs, helping them connect learning and professional applications.

ePortfolios as Professional Development

When it comes to full-time instructors and staff creating ePortfolios themselves, scholarship is mixed. Often, the use of faculty-created ePortfolios takes up tenure portfolios, which appear much more like digital repositories than the reflective, integrative examples we see described in ePortfolio literature (Lakin, 2016; LeVan, 2020; Pinto Zipp, 2010). While electronic in nature, these portfolios are meant to replace "three-ring binders" and make credentials of faculty more electronically accessible and visible (Ajobon et al., 2022). Faculty making these portfolios may struggle to understand their value and purpose outside of a limited evaluation and promotion context, making the technological barriers to ePortfolio creation more insurmountable (Wai-tsz Fong et al., 2014). ePortfolios grounded in reflection and integrative learning and paired with sustained professional development programs can have great impact on instructors and staff.

There are some examples in the literature of faculty creating these more intentional and reflective ePortfolios. When extending what we know about professional student ePortfolios to educators, ePortfolios enable the showcasing and development of teaching philosophies, research, and service activities with documentable process-based evidence as teaching products, demonstrating professional growth and reflective practice. For example, the National Forum of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Ireland found that ePortfolios offered faculty and staff a flexible and individualized approach to developing academic practice and gathering evidence to be used later in promotion and evaluation processes, although time was a considerable barrier (Costelloe, 2021). Danowitz (2012) also highlighted the potential of these ePortfolios to support reflection and professional showcasing while demythologizing tenure requirements and creating avenues for peer-to-peer mentoring. The approach allows faculty to integrate feedback, reflect on their teaching practices, and document achievement. ePortfolios can also serve as tools for peer review and collaboration, providing a platform for faculty to share best practices and engage in professional dialogues, supporting the growing emphasis on lifelong learning and the need for educators to adapt to evolving educational technologies and pedagogies.

Challenges to Supporting Instructor and Staff ePortfolios

A caveat to the creation of these ePortfolios is the labor and time involved for ePortfolio creators (Costelloe, 2021). In the context of enhancing online teaching, which is the focus of GSOLE's certification, those doing the work are often graduate students, non-tenure-track instructors, and contingent faculty (Bedford, 2009; Mechenbier, 2015; Mechenbier & Warnock, 2019; Melonçon, 2017)—those who may lack the support and time to both complete a

certification and an ePortfolio that is not immediately valued in typical professional academic systems. This population of instructors is even more likely to be institutionally under supported, unstable, and even further removed from the financial and social support afforded to full-time faculty (Executive Committee, 2020). For this reason, on initial inspection, the creation of an ePortfolio in a professional development program catering to online faculty and staff might seem like an impossible task. However, aligning with some ePortfolio best practices like scaffolding, structuring time for reflection, and connecting learning with career goals can make the process of creating the ePortfolios more meaningful and less cumbersome (Cordie et al., 2019; Eynon et al., 2014).

Guiding faculty and staff through the process of ePortfolio development is not easy. In the GSOLE OLI certification program, we leverage hands-on training workshops, reflective practice, and the integration of technology and assessment. Mentorship and peer review help educators refine their portfolio thinking, gain diverse perspectives, and improve inclusive and reflective practices. Ongoing support and resources include instructional guides and model portfolios. After ePortfolio creators have had an opportunity to construct their ePortfolio and refine it with peer and mentor feedback, ePortfolios are formally assessed by trained evaluators who are also experts in OLI. Faculty development certification programs, like the certification discussed in this article, can build on the history of composition pedagogical frameworks and portfolio theory to validate the skills and competencies of educators making ePortfolios and promote a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement.

Methods

Research Context

The Global Society of Online Literacy Educators (GSOLE) is a professional organization that connects online reading and writing instructors and tutors through its annual virtual conference, webinars, open access publications, research support, and certification program. We are GSOLE members and leaders in both the certification program and organization. Started in 2020 by a subcommittee of online literacy instruction (OLI) designers, the certification program was designed to move beyond isolated, self-paced, one-and-done online teaching certification programs (GSOLE, 2019), favoring instead a sustainable approach to give participants opportunities to reflect on current scholarship and how it speaks to participant identities—goals which align strongly to values found in ePortfolio theory and practice. The Basic OLI Certification spans eight months to foster participant interaction with instructor-mentors who are experts in the field of OLI and to develop an ePortfolio in which they reflect on their OLI identity, integrate what they have learned into local contexts through the creation of seven artifacts, and consider how they will connect GSOLE's principles and tenets (2019) to teaching practices that emanate from their values about writing and online education (Cicchino et al., 2021).

As participants complete their artifacts, they reflect on their creation and are given feedback by their instructor-mentor. Participants are given an assignment sheet with background information on ePortfolios, links ePortfolio design templates, and detailed instructions for completing the ePortfolio (see Appendix). The assignment sheet and ongoing feedback foregrounds the importance of theory, encouraging participants to "communicate your growing expertise in OLI" by "linking your practice to OLI scholarship and research" (Appendix). Along with ongoing reflection and feedback during the certification, the final module focuses extensively on the ePortfolio's creation. Participants have the option of creating learning or professional ePortfolios and choose artifacts that align with their broader personal and professional goals. While each ePortfolio type is described in greater detail in Appendix, learning ePortfolios are more personal and ask participants to "reflect on new knowledge and how the learner will apply that knowledge to their local context" (Appendix). These portfolios focus more on participant growth and understanding connected to their local contexts whereas the professional ePortfolios are meant to be public-facing and showcase a professional online identity. For example, participants have used the professional ePortfolios on the job market or for promotion or contract review.

After participants complete the ePortfolio, it is evaluated on a pass/fail basis by a Board of ePortfolio Evaluators who assess shell functionality, the Theory of OLI, artifacts, reflective writing, and overall demonstrated expertise in OLI. Participants who do not pass the portfolio have the option to revise and resubmit their ePortfolio for re-evaluation. All portfolios in this study earned a "passing" evaluation on either an initial or revised submission.

This ePortfolio analysis is part of a larger qualitative study tracing the effects of the Basic OLI Certification program among participants, including pre-/post-surveys, interviews, and document analysis. As one source of data in that study, the team analyzed seven ePortfolios created as the final assessment benchmark for completing the GSOLE Basic OLI Certification. Existing research on faculty/staff ePortfolios is limited as time constraints and recognition systems rarely provide faculty/staff with adequate support and incentive to develop ePortfolios. The certification program is unique in

requiring an ePortfolio as the final step in certification. While limited in number (n = 7), we hope this analysis can offer examples and raise important questions about learning and professional ePortfolios when developed as part of a professional development certification program.

Participant Demographics

While all certification participants were invited to join the study, only nine consented to participate in some form of data collection (survey, interview, and/or ePortfolio analysis). Seven of those participants gave us permission to analyze ePortfolios. Participants worked primarily at four-year (n = 5) and two-year (n = 2) colleges. Many have also matriculated into GSOLE leadership positions. They held a range of professional appointments, including two staff and three non-tenure-track, one pre-tenure, and one tenured faculty within a K-12 college bridge program. Four had previous experience teaching online when they began the certification program while three had not taught online when they registered for the certification program. Five created professional or teaching ePortfolios while two created learning ePortfolios.

Data Analysis Process

Goals of this research study were descriptive rather than experimental in nature; consequently, data analysis methods emphasized describing patterns and characteristics in these data as opposed to developing replicable research results or certification models. In this article we focus on three research questions connected to participant ePortfolios:

1. After completing the program, how did participants communicate their OLI identity and knowledge in either a learning or professional ePortfolio?
2. How did ePortfolios illustrate participant growth in the Basic OLI Certification Program?
3. What did participants come to value in OLI and in what ways (if any) were those values present in their ePortfolio?

The research team analyzed data in ways informed by inductive methodological approaches of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999), such as recursive questioning and discussion, axial coding, thick descriptions, and saturation. In addition, deductive approaches informed by our knowledge of the certification program and the GSOLE organization were also utilized. Members began by grouping excerpts from the full set of data collected for the study (ePortfolios, interviews, and surveys) into patterns and themes through open, inductive coding.

Next, the team engaged in conversations about our research questions, the certification curriculum, and the GSOLE Principles and Tenets (2019) driving that curriculum, as we reviewed the early themes and continued reading more excerpts. The five-person research team agreed on t-unit length (one unit of thought) and during early rounds of coding, limited analysis to no more than double-coding each t-unit to help us define the boundaries of each code. Geisler and Swarts (2019) highlighted the importance of determining rules and structure, particularly across a research team, as "two people may segment the same string of language in two different ways," leading to inconsistencies in analysis and potential issues when attempting to apply codes to these data (p. 67). The team gathered iteratively from January to December 2023 to discuss potential codes, practice applying these codes, and refine the codebook by eliminating or adding codes. Each meeting, the group would arrive with sets of individual codes assigned to a sample of data, their individual coding sets would be merged, and they would discuss the points of disagreement using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Constant comparative method emphasizes the importance for ongoing reflection and analysis throughout the coding process—even if that process causes some confusion as coding concepts emerge and are refined (Heath & Cowley, 2004). As coding progressed and the research team came to better agreement about the definitions and applications of each code, coding was opened to allow for more than two code co-occurrences per t-unit when necessary.

Codes were applied using ATLAS.ti, a coding software that allows for individual, merged, and collaborative coding and includes the ability to upload and code images. ePortfolios were uploaded as a string of connected PDFs. While we acknowledge that presenting ePortfolios in PDF format minimizes the digital capacities of the portfolio, ATLAS.ti required a stable representation of the ePortfolio to store assigned codes. For this reason, the codes were assigned primarily to the written text (including transcripts of videos) and static images in the portfolios. During our coding process, ATLAS.ti released an AI-enhanced coding feature, which we opted not to use. After a year (spanning 10 meetings), the research team finalized 10 codes for the full research project—nine of which appeared in ePortfolio data. We provide the nine active codes and their definitions in Table 1. We offer a summary of these codes and their data in the reporting section below before aligning patterns in coding to implications for faculty/staff portfolios and portfolio-related professional development programs.

Table 1
Codes and Code Definitions

Code	Code definition
Self-awareness or intentionality	Purposeful attention to class, pedagogical design, or the choices they make as online teachers (e.g., choosing particular technologies, assignments, policies). Includes choices that in reflection they would make differently or not do again.
Inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility (IDEA)	An approach to OLI that values accessibility-driven inclusive practices, like welcoming all students, an awareness of limited access to internet and technology, IDEA pedagogical strategies, choice of using certain technologies because of access, and/or an awareness of technical accessibility practices.
Affect	Feelings associated with professional development, GSOLE, or teaching online
Teaching identity/schema – certification	The values, principles, outlook, and expectations that participants held before, during, and after the certification; may be described with "I am . . ." or "I believe . . ." statements.
Community of professional development support	The recognition of a social professional network through an acknowledgement of the professional OLI community, institutional community, teaching/learning community, etc.
Theory	Participants allude to readings, research, and concepts found in OLI scholarship (going beyond "tips and tricks" or OLI lore).
Praxis and application	Application-driven practice of theoretical concepts related to OLI research or scholarship. Practice must identify specific/concrete examples, activity, strategy from a teaching environment.
Technology	Identifying affordances or technologically grounded knowledge by mentioning specific technology tool by name or technology phrase nonspecific to tool (e.g., voice to text, LMS)
Motivation – certification	Situated in an awareness of why they took the certification program or in what ways the certification is important in their professional development, such as professional wellbeing, professional gain, community contribution.

Table 2
Frequency of Code Usage Within and Across Portfolio Types

Code	No. of quotations tagged (n = 7 portfolios, n = 678 total coded units of thought)	Freq. across professional portfolios (n = 5 portfolios, n = 580 total coded units of thought)	Freq. across learning portfolios (n = 2 portfolios, n = 98 total coded units of thought)
Self-awareness or intentionality	206/678 30.3%	182/580 31.3%	24/98 24.5%
IDEA	195/678 28.7%	166/580 28.6%	29/98 29.6%
Praxis & application	182/678 26.8%	169/580 29.1%	13/98 13.2%
Theory	145/678 21.3%	114/580 19.6%	31/98 31.6%
Technology	141/678 20.8%	134/580 23.1%	7/98 7.1%
Teaching identity/schema	54/678 7.9%	41/580 7.0%	13/98 13.2%
Affect	21/678 3.1%	20/580 3.4%	1/98 1.0%
Community of prof development support	4/678 0.6%	3/580 0.5%	1/98 1.0%
Motivation/certification	2/678 0.3%	1/580 0.1%	1/98 1.0%

Findings and Discussion

Across the seven ePortfolios, 678 units of thought (referred to as "quotations" in ATLAS.ti) were tagged with one or more of nine codes. At this stage, portfolios were also divided by purpose to help us understand the emergent themes related to OLI teaching identity (Research Question 1), growth in the certification program (Research Question 2), and values about OLI (Research Question 3) that appeared in each portfolio type, given their differing audiences and goals. A majority (n = 5) of participants developed professional teaching portfolios and two developed learning portfolios. The five professional portfolios contained 580 total coded units of thought, while the two learning portfolios contained 98 coded units of thought. Table 2 represents the distribution of the nine codes across all 678 quotations in the full data set as well as within each portfolio type, providing a clear comparison of relative frequency of codes within the professional and learning portfolios.

The most frequently appearing codes related to intentionality or awareness in pedagogical design (self-awareness, intentionality), the creation of accessibility-driven inclusive OLI practices (inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility/IDEA), the application of OLI concepts/scholarship into practice (praxis), the mention of theory and scholarship (theory), and the use of technology or technological affordances (technology). In the sections below, we delve more deeply into the code distribution across and within those two portfolio types; within each section, we present results of commonly occurring codes, followed by analysis and discussion of those results considering previous scholarship and the context of the OLI certification program.

Common Codes Across ePortfolio Types

Across both professional and learning portfolio types, participants frequently communicated their OLI knowledge (Research Question 1) by discussing theory and IDEA. Reflective writing often took up theory to link ePortfolio artifacts back to the initial readings in the course, a finding that mirrors the benefits of reflective writing in student ePortfolio practice—namely that reflection can aid ePortfolio creators in integrative thinking, linking learned content (in this case, OLI research and scholarship) with application and practice (Cordie et al., 2019; Eynon et al., 2014). The finding could be due in part to the role theory and scholarship played throughout the certification course: along with the portfolio assignment sheet, the first seven modules included a selection of essential and additional research-based readings (and the eighth module supported participants in building and refining their ePortfolios). The linking of theory to practice emphasized in the ePortfolio assignment sheet may also have contributed to the frequency of the praxis/application code, particularly within professional portfolios, where one goal is to communicate specifics about pedagogical practices to external readers (e.g., hiring or promotion committees). Because praxis can encompass a broad range of classroom practices and applications, we used a code co-occurrence chart to identify instances in which a single or overlapping t-units were coded with praxis and another code from our codebook in the hopes of better understanding the concepts participants were putting in conversation with their discussions of praxis. Based on these co-occurrences, we found that participants most often discussed praxis in ways that emphasized their use of technology in the online classroom (52 co-occurrences), described how their teaching practices exemplified IDEA principles (54 co-occurrences), and demonstrated intentionality in teaching decisions, informed by their learning in the certification program and from their previous teaching experiences (63 co-occurrences). Table 3 presents this co-occurrence view with representative examples. Note that because some t-units were labeled with more than two codes, some of these co-occurrences overlap.

Unlike theory and praxis codes, attention to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA code) was not emphasized on the portfolio assignment sheet yet was another highly visible code across both ePortfolio types, suggesting it ranked high among participants' values as online educators (Research Question 3). The result could be because accessibility and inclusivity have been foundational to GSOLE from its inception. Moreover, the certification begins with GSOLE's Principles and Tenets (2019), with the first principle stating, "Online literacy instruction should be universally accessible and inclusive" (GSOLE Principles & Tenets, 2019, Principle 1). While the first module introduces participants to these principles and tenets, the second module emphasizes accessibility and inclusivity, and accessibility of portfolio content is a metric that evaluators consider when reviewing ePortfolios. Because these are key values of the GSOLE organization, IDEA code concepts were featured consistently across readings and assignments. We were inspired by how prominently a diverse range of IDEA practices appeared in participants' portfolios—samples of which are summarized with representative quotes in Table 4.

Table 3
Co-Occurrences Between Praxis and Other Codes

Code co-occurring with praxis	No. of co-occurrences	Sample quote from GSOLE portfolio
Affect	1	"Using reflection and peer-to-peer responding and feedback activities which are guided and shaped by empathy help create a community of support and celebration for work well done." (Participant A)
Teaching identity/schema	14	"In practice, this means that I view my interactions with all learners as opportunities to create and deepen student attachments to campus (virtual) spaces. . . . This means that I share campus activity opportunities with students broadly, and I actively encourage students to engage with relevant campus activities based on their personal needs and interests." (Participant B)
Theory	36	"The tone of the assignment sheets and instruction is invitational and encouraging with plenty of helps and support as suggested by Warnock and Gasiewski." (Participant A)
Technology	52	"I can share the link to the slides in our chat box, and we can both manipulate the text in real time during our tutoring session." (Participant B)
IDEA	54	"One way I do this is by centering Black Language in course readings and on assignment sheets, both of which are shared digitally." (Participant D)
Self-awareness or intentionality	63	"Also, based on the feedback that I received from that Spring 2021 pilot, I offered two options for completing the assignment in Fall 2021: a 2-source option focusing on our in-class texts and a 3- source option which allowed students to add a source of their choice." (Participant C)

Professional ePortfolios

The five professional ePortfolios were developed by participants holding tenured (1), non-tenure-track (3), and staff (1) positions with only one of these participants paying for the certification program through institutional funds. Self-supported enrollment could be one reason these participants developed professional showcase portfolios, with three participants expressing an intention to use the portfolios on the job market and all five noting that they enrolled "to get a certificate that could make me more marketable" (GSOLE Certification Survey, Q6). Because of the professional purpose of their ePortfolios, these participants had dual audiences: the OLI-expert Board of ePortfolio Evaluators and a potentially interdisciplinary hiring committee. Thus, they had to create an ePortfolio that could convey OLI expertise (Research Question 1) while still being accessible to readers outside of their discipline and field.

The praxis/application code was more widely used by professional ePortfolio creators and appeared more often than the theory code in this group of ePortfolios. Often, praxis appeared in the reflective writing to curate artifacts and explain how they transferred OLI scholarship into local practice. One ePortfolio creator wrote, for example, "helping students establish habits of workflow in writing is crucial in their future writing lives. To help facilitate processes of writing, I heavily scaffold assignment sequences" (Participant D). Another wrote, "In hopes of improving digital literacy, I reassessed my practices and incorporated more low-risk assessments earlier in the course that allows students to interact and use a variety of built-in tools within the CMS" (Participant F). In both examples, ePortfolio creators are leveraging reflective writing to link their teaching values and evidenced-based OLI practices to specific choices they made in designing or delivering online courses. For an external audience unfamiliar with the certification course, this translation and application create a helpful bridge and assumes ePortfolio viewers are less familiar with online learning contexts or OLI theory.

Table 4
IDEA Concepts and Representative Quotations

IDEA concept	Sample quote from GSOLE portfolio
Equity	"Our larger society [is] replete with broad and powerful linguistic, gender, racial, and economic inequalities. I try to create online spaces that do not reproduce these inequalities. I am not naive in believing that my online spaces are unique utopian spaces, but I do strive to create safe spaces." (Participant B)
Socio-economic equity	"We must pay attention to the economic accessibility of our classes, including choice of textbook and other content students must pay for as well as the bandwidth required." (Participant G)
Linguistic equity	"We learned that students (and employees) have a right to their own language; still, when confronted with a moment in which this right to language is not upheld, serious consequences can ensue, a rhetorical reality that leaves many students conflicted about ways forward. 'Do I code switch, suppressing my home language, and (hopefully) get the job, or do I stay true to my home language and remain unemployed?'" (Participant D)
Intercultural equity	"Grading contracts afford equity, as a measurable amount of labor is equal across the board for all students, rejecting the privilege of students who have been trained in cultures and education systems that reflect white habits of languaging." (Participant D)
Racial equity	"I argue that the CoI framework including authentic social, teaching, and social presence is directly related to issues of racial justice because building community for all learners requires a socially just foundation." (Participant B)
Accessibility across devices	"Because Audacity can be downloaded as an app on mobile devices, the assignment could be completed or forwarded on any electronic portable device to which the student might own or have access." (Participant A)
Accessibility and disability	"The video incorporates closed captions and voice navigation of what is being done and typed for visually impaired or hearing impaired users, which encompasses OLI Principle 1 on accessibility and inclusion." (Participant E)
Universal design for learning principles	"Writing, like dance, does not come easily for everyone. As several scholars have noted, from cognitive, to physical, to psychological reasons, students can struggle, or better stated, students need various pathways to the content." (Participant C)
Student choice and agency	"I also provide multiple ways for students to complete low-stakes assignments such as reading responses: they can post pictures of hand-written concept maps, word processor-generated notes, or audio or video comments. In a pre-course survey, I ask students how they want to receive feedback from me: written comments, audio comments, or video comments. I aim to honor those preferences as I provide feedback." (Participant C)

The technology code was also more prevalent in the professional ePortfolio group with ePortfolio creators highlighting their literacy in digital teaching platforms and tools, such as learning management systems (e.g., Canvas), virtual conferencing and recording platforms (e.g., Zoom), presentation tools (e.g., Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint), virtual collaboration platforms (e.g., Live Steam, Google Docs), and multimodal platforms (e.g., Flipgrid). They also noted that their knowledge of technology (Research Question 1) could be leveraged to enact their teaching values (Research Question 3). For instance, one portfolio creator explained how their choice in technology supported mobile access for students: "presenting this module via the PPTX/Google Slides platform is easily accessible via a mobile device, as per the recommendations of Rodrigo" (Participant D). By conveying their ability to use technologies to enhance their teaching abilities and the learning experience for students, these portfolio creators highlight technology as a professional skillset. Yancey (2004) noted that an ePortfolio "not only inhabits the digital space and is distributed electronically but also exploits the medium," leveraging digital affordances like links, multimedia, and digital design (p. 745). Likewise, OLI operates in a digital environment and demands that educators understand the unique affordances and limitations of the online learning space. We were not surprised to see that OLI educators creating ePortfolios were drawn to make connections between online teaching and other digital educational technologies.

Learning Portfolios

The two learning portfolios were developed by one tenure-track professor who also held administrative responsibilities in their writing program and a part-time staff tutor in a writing center at a community college. Both ePortfolio creators credited the pandemic as one reason they wanted to enroll in the certification program with one writing,

> I was challenged by the pandemic to find ways to make my teaching more accessible, more compassionate, and more engaging and to find accessible, compassionate, and engaging ways to share that knowledge with the adjunct faculty who teach many of our writing courses. (Participant G)

While they both self-identified their ePortfolios as "learning portfolios," the artifacts featured throughout often had a secondary audience, including instructors, tutors, or students at home institutions. One ePortfolio creator, for instance, created a set of artifacts designated as "tools and templates" to be used by their colleagues to "improv[e] their online courses" by "giving students multiple pathways to completing assignments and emphasizing student collaboration and interaction." They stated that these tools "provide content the instructor can use in their own course, a brief tutorial to help with assessing multimodal compositions, and forms for evaluating student interaction online" which should help them bring these practices into their teaching despite the reality that instructors are often "pressed for time" (Participant G). The other learning ePortfolio creator, likewise, shared several resources developed to help tutors at their institution, including a resource for promoting evidence-based online tutoring for multilingual writers, an evaluation of the digital FlipGrid tool, and a resource for helping tutors develop "effective interaction and interrelations with student writers" (Participant B). Thus, while the goal of these portfolios was to reflect on participants' learning and progress (Research Question 2), ePortfolios have the capacity to be shared in public spaces, so artifacts were still designed to engage public audiences and serve a purpose beyond the certification course (Watson et al., 2016).

While both groups emphasized theory and scholarship, theory was the most popular code among learning ePortfolio creators. This is perhaps because of their audience, which included other OLI scholar-practitioners like their instructor-mentor in the certification course and the Board of Evaluators that would review their final ePortfolio. Because they were developing an ePortfolio for OLI experts and not an interdisciplinary non-expert audience (e.g., a hiring committee), they had the freedom to focus more deeply on the links between their practice and scholarship in online teaching. Likewise, because of this context, the portfolio assignment sheet's criteria, which heavily emphasized the link between theory and practice, became more influential as they finalized their portfolios for review.

While a popular code across all data, the self-awareness and intentionality code in the learning portfolios often pointed to moments of realization. Describing the "openness" of online courses, one portfolio creator wrote,

> While in the past I've reacted to this openness by increasing rigor, creating checklists upon checklists for students to consult, and adhering strictly to deadlines and requirements, I now embrace the "open invitation" an online writing course can provide, seeing the relationship between students and teachers as one that thrives when choice is prioritized. (Participant G)

Learning portfolio creators, because of the internal purpose and audience for their portfolios, had more license to express partial and growing understanding, using reflective writing to draw out ideas without the pressure to demonstrate a polished knowledgeable demeanor more commonly characterizing professional portfolios. The finding echoes Carter and Gradin's (2000) finding that, due to the emphasis on reflection, student ePortfolios have the potential to support self-reflexivity or the ability to look across moments of learning to articulate the learning process. However, to support this reflexive goal, we must move beyond thinking of faculty and staff ePortfolios as simply artifact repositories (as is often the case in evaluation and promotion portfolios).

Underrepresented Codes

The research team imagined that teaching identity/schema (Research Question 1) would be a more visible code in these two types of ePortfolios because of how identity development is featured in ePortfolio literature (Bauer, 2009; Torres & McKinley, 2023), but this was not the case. Teaching identity/schema was applied 13 times across learning ePortfolios as ePortfolio creators described their identities and values in the online classroom. One ePortfolio creator wrote,

> I view my interactions with all learners as opportunities to create and deepen student attachments to campus (virtual) spaces. . . . I share campus activity opportunities with students broadly, and I actively encourage students to engage with relevant campus activities depending on their personal needs and interests. (Participant B)

Another wrote,

> I use the concept of the "open invitation to learn" as the guiding principle for designing and implementing my online, hybrid, and web-enhanced courses. The artifacts I've collected in this portfolio reflect my growing commitment to creating flexible and interactive online writing courses, both through curriculum development and resources supporting writing instructors. (Participant G)

Anecdotally, many certification participants highlight identity development as a primary challenge of creating their final portfolio, a challenge that is also established in the literature by students creating portfolios (Bauer, 2009; Torres & McKinley, 2023). This might be related to the time and labor constraints many certification participants faced given their positionality as non-tenured, non-tenure-track, staff, and graduate or contingent labor, a positionality that is widely reflected by populations who often teach online writing courses (Executive Committee, 2020; Mechenbier, 2015; Mechenbier & Warnock, 2019).

Another underrepresented code in our data analysis was the "community of professional development support," which was only mentioned four times across both portfolio types. While community is not inherently emphasized in ePortfolio literature, it does help us reflect as program administrators on how we do (or do not) emphasize the collective or community in ePortfolio development specifically or the certification course curriculum more broadly. This leads us to emphasize the programmatic and assessment value of leveraging ePortfolios in professional development programming contexts. Not only did the ePortfolio encourage participants to explore their growth and identity over time, distinguishing them from one-off professional development opportunities, but they also provided certification administrators an opportunity to see what participants learned, how they applied this knowledge to their local contexts, the larger values and beliefs they held around online teaching, and concepts or values that were absent or underrepresented in the certification ePortfolios (treating them as assessment portfolios).

Conclusions

The analysis of faculty and staff ePortfolios has significant implications for the GSOLE certification program. First, themes in these data highlight the strengths of the certification curriculum with particular attention to intentional online teaching practice, IDEA, application of OLI scholarship, and the introduction to OLI theory. However, these data likewise identify areas where the curriculum could be revised based on the underrepresented themes; namely, community, affect, and teaching identity. For example, the limited mentions of "community" in the ePortfolios reasonably reflect the fact that participants are prompted throughout the certification course to focus on their local contexts. However, interviews, conducted as part of our larger programmatic assessment, as well as anecdotal discussions with certification participants describe GSOLE's importance to some participants' sense of belonging, especially when the individual is their department's or institution's only person with a scholarly interest in writing studies, let alone online literacy education. While asking participants to reflect on the sense of community GSOLE can offer to support their local work may seem self-serving to the organization, we think that it can also give participants an opportunity to solidify the notion that they have an intellectual home for their work.

In addition to implications for certification administration, there are broader implications for online professional development programs and for ePortfolio practice. First, online professional development can go beyond self-paced, one-off programming to asynchronous programming that promotes sustained engagement, reflection, and the local application of theory. For online educators, professional development must include opportunities to learn theoretical and evidence-based OLI concepts over time, connect with peers and mentors in OLI, and be guided in adapting theoretical knowledge to their local contexts. In these cases, faculty and staff ePortfolios can facilitate a deeper understanding of how professional development goals are internalized and enacted by participants, thus enabling a richer ability to assess certification curriculum and effectiveness.

For the field of ePortfolio practice, these data offer one attempt to understand faculty and staff ePortfolios from contexts that extend beyond the repository-style of many tenure and promotion ePortfolios. While these studies contribute to a growing conversation in faculty and staff ePortfolios, the field needs to continue asking how faculty and staff ePortfolios can confirm, extend, or challenge what we know about ePortfolios. For instance, in our data, we noticed that identity formation is less present in faculty and staff ePortfolios and in follow-up studies. However, we would be interested to know if changes to ePortfolio professional development curriculum or how the ePortfolio is framed can shape and reinforce the role identity plays in faculty and staff ePortfolio creation.

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Appendix
ePortfolio Assignment Sheet

Throughout the certification, you will develop and refine artifacts that represent your identity and expertise as an online literacy instructor. Module 8 will help you combine your artifacts into a cohesive, revised ePortfolio. You are welcome to use any of our existing ePortfolio templates (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RT_tkX-php63dwEaWsRNxf51lMyyBH6sgFa1HRW-nz4/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.q4bma9b7nkdd) for your ePortfolio or create your own design. While this ePortfolio will integrate your learning and prompt you to reflect, we hope it will have additional relevance for you as a professional beyond the course. *Your ePortfolio will also be reviewed on a pass/fail basis by a GSOLE Board of Evaluators as your final step to certification.*

This assignment sheet will introduce you to ePortfolios as a genre (what they are, why we make them, and conventions of an ePortfolio), explain the criteria for a successful ePortfolio in this course, and offer potential options and resources for technology.

What Is an ePortfolio?

ePortfolios are personal websites that communicate your skills, experiences, and knowledge to an audience. To accomplish this purpose, ePortfolios contain artifacts that are contextualized and explained to your audience through reflective writing. Connecting all of the artifacts is a cohesive story about who you are as an online writing instructor, which should be observable on the homepage, in your OLI Theory, and across your artifacts and their reflective writing. To learn more about what an ePortfolio is, check out this video.

ePortfolios can vary depending on your audience and purpose, but there are a few steady conventions:

- An electronic site with a **consistent design** with **artifacts** and **reflective writing**
- An **about me section** that introduces the ePortfolio creator and frames the rest of the site
- **Artifacts**, which act as **evidence of your skills and experiences**. Artifacts can be any kind of document or media. Your artifacts should come from the assignments you completed in previous GSOLE professional development modules and make connecting between how you practice online instruction and the scholarship and theories you have read throughout the certification program
- A **cohesive story about your professional identity** (in this case, your identity as an online writing instructor)
- GSOLE ePortfolios, specifically, must also include a **theory of OLI**.

Good ePortfolios are **easy to navigate, functional, accessible,** and **engaging**. They also take into consideration their audience and purpose. Because they are electronic, ePortfolios are **public-facing**. You will want to consider this as you develop your own site. When publishing your site, many platforms allow you to limit searchability by creating an unlisted link or to password-protect your ePortfolio. We encourage you to consider these options before you publish your site for feedback.

Types of ePortfolios

In the context of this certification, you will complete either a **learning ePortfolio** or a **professional ePortfolio.**

- **Learning ePortfolios** are personal and are for the learner and their learning community (i.e., GSOLE). The goal of a learning ePortfolio is to reflect on new knowledge and how the learner will apply that knowledge to their local context. A good learning ePortfolio tells a story about how knowledge was acquired and why that knowledge has meaning to how you understand and practice OLI. If developing a learning ePortfolio, you might consider making your site private or password-protected.
- **Professional ePortfolios** are public and have a variety of outside audiences: administrators, hiring committees, colleagues in the field, or professional organizations beyond GSOLE. The goal of a professional ePortfolio is to show a polished professional identity—in this case, an identity as an online educator. A good professional ePortfolio is cohesive and represents a clear and compelling OLI identity.

> Remember, the audience for this ePortfolio exists outside of the context for the certification, so you will want to use reflective writing to contextualize each artifact for a public audience who knows nothing about GSOLE or the OLI Certification. You'll also want to be sure to critically consider any artifacts that openly critique your institution's practices and make revisions accordingly.

You can choose the type of ePortfolio that most aligns with your goals for the certificate.

Reflective Process Statement *(250-500 words):* As you submit your ePortfolio for review by the Board of Evaluators, you will complete a short paragraph of reflective writing addressing the following prompt:

> An ePortfolio should center around a cohesive OLI identity. How would you describe the learning or professional identity you worked to convey on this ePortfolio? In what ways do the artifacts contribute to that identity? What was your process for selecting, revising, and contextualizing artifacts within the ePortfolio? What about the ePortfolio process challenged you? If you had to do this all again, what would you do differently and why?

Criteria for a Successful ePortfolio in This Certification

These criteria are what the evaluators use to assess your portfolio:

Criterion	Description
ePortfolio Shell	A strong ePortfolio shell has a cohesive, consistent, and functional design that is appropriate for the purpose and identity being communicated. Viewers should be able to access all materials, and the site should be designed to function across devices (e.g., laptop, tablet, smartphone) and accessibility measures should be taken as advised in Modules 2 and 8.
Theory of OLI	Like a teaching philosophy, your theory of OLI communicates your approach to OLI, your rationale for this approach, and examples of you enacting this approach. Your theory of OLI should tie together artifacts in your ePortfolio to your cohesive identity as an online instructor or tutor and link to OLI scholarship and research. In Module 8, you will receive additional guidance on developing this theory. You can either move this into the ePortfolio as a longer document that you link to, or you can break your theory up and place it across different pages of the portfolio site. Consider which approach to organization will serve this document's purpose: to communicate your expertise in OLI by grounding your practical approaches to OLI research and theory.
5-8 Artifacts with Reflective Writing	Artifacts show evidence of your learning and can be in the form of documents or media. Each professional development course you encounter in GSOLE's certification program will prompt you to create a potential artifact. If you choose to move that artifact into your ePortfolio, we expect you to revise it using instructor feedback. Your artifact should be accessible to diverse audiences through the addition of closed captioning, alt text or captioned descriptions, viewability across devices, etc. Reflective writing should appear alongside the artifact to contextualize and explain how the artifact demonstrates your knowledge and identity as an OLI practitioner and expert. Besides providing much needed context, reflective writing can help viewers understand why an artifact matters and how it shows evidence of your expertise and identity as an online literacy instructor. We recommend you also link practice back to theory and scholarship in your reflective writing. To learn more about reflective writing look at this handout, which should help you begin to develop reflective writing for your artifacts.
Demonstrated Expertise in OLI Based on Learning in the Courses	ePortfolios are meant to integrate learning. We hope that the OLI principles and course outcomes will be evident in your final ePortfolio. While the ePortfolio is a chance to creatively represent yourself, its success is contingent upon your ability to effectively communicate your growing expertise in OLI. This includes linking your practice to OLI scholarship and research.

ePortfolios will receive opportunities for formative feedback from peers and instructors throughout Module 8. ePortfolios will also receive summative feedback from GSOLE Certification Evaluation Committee when they submit their ePortfolios for final review.

What Technology Can I Use?

You can choose any technology to build your ePortfolio as long as it can be electronically accessed by your peers, instructor-mentor, and evaluators. We will offer three suggestions for creating your site. These suggestions operate as drag-and-drop platforms making them easy to create, even without website design experience. However, you are not limited to these sites. Each has an accompanying resource that offers a broad overview.

To read a comparison of these platforms, see this *ROLE* article by Refaei and Benander and this platform comparison chart. Importantly, these sites might give you an opportunity to subscribe and pay for a professional account. You are not required to pay for any of these platforms to pass GSOLE certification.

- Google Sites: Introduction Video
- Weebly: Tutorial Video
- Wix: How to Use Wix Resource

GSOLE ePortfolio Templates

To support you in the construction of your portfolio, we have created three templates on Google Sites, which you are welcome to adapt and personalize. To get a copy of the template, please email certification administrator, and let them know your Gmail address and which template you want a copy of:

- Template 1: https://sites.google.com/view/gsole-template-1/home
- Template 2: https://sites.google.com/view/gsole-template-2/artifacts-of-online-teaching
- Template 3: https://sites.google.com/view/gsole-template-3/project-page

These templates are meant to ease the labor of constructing a portfolio from a blank canvas and we encourage you to make edits and revisions to further personalize the site during Module 8.