

# Digital Portfolios at Amherst Regional Middle School

By Tom Fanning

# This project is about assessment.

Documenting the depth of understanding exhibited by students through the examination of the academic work they have archived in their digital portfolios.

# Hypothesis:

Students and teachers can quantify the depth of understanding that individual students possess through the evaluation of sequential portfolio assessments.

As a result of this process of self-assessment, students become aware of their own cognitive development, and are able to improve performance by setting their own goals.

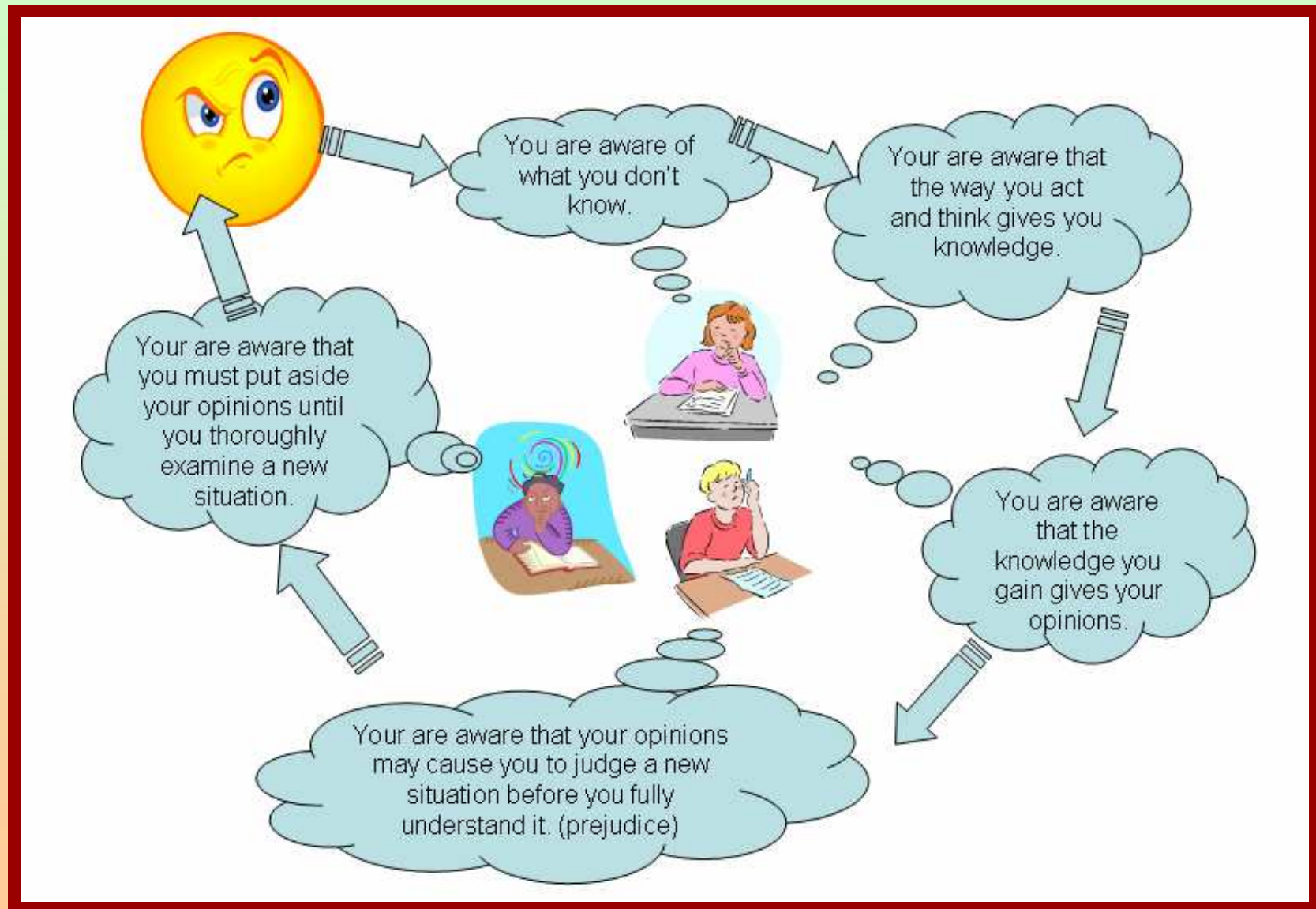
# Evaluation criteria: Self-knowledge

The Self-Knowledge rubric has been taken from Wiggins and McTighe's "Rubric for the Six Facets of Understanding".

<b>Levels of Self-Knowledge shown in my portfolio web site.</b> (The wording here has been <u>somewhat modified</u> for use with middle school students.)	
Wise	Deeply aware of the boundaries of your own and others' understanding. You are able to recognize your prejudices and opinions. You are able and willing to act on what you understand.
Watchful	Aware of your ignorance and that of others; You know your own prejudices. You know the strengths and limits of your understanding.
Thoughtful	Generally aware of what you know and don't know. You know that prejudice can occur and change your views without you knowing it.
Unreflective	Generally unaware of what you don't know. Also unaware of how opinions based on prior knowledge affect how well you know yourself.
Newbie	Unaware of the bounds of your own understanding. Need to learn to project your thinking as a tool for self-assessment.

# Explaining the self-knowledge rubric

Rewording the criteria so that middle school students can understand it and use it for evaluating their own work.



# Evaluation criteria: Explanation

The Explanation rubric has been taken from Wiggins and McTighe's "Rubric for the Six Facets of Understanding".

<b>Levels of Explanation shown in my portfolio web site.</b> (The wording here has <u>not</u> been modified for use with middle school students.)	
Sophisticated	An unusually thorough, inventive, and fully supported account. It is deep and broad: goes well beyond the information given.
In-depth	A revealing account that goes well beyond what is obvious or what was explicitly taught. Subtle connections are made; it is well supported by evidence; novel thinging is displayed.
Developed	An account that reflects some in-depth and personalized ideas; the student is making the work her own, going beyond the given – there is supported theory here, but insufficient or inadequate argument or evidence.
Intuitive	An incomplete account but with apt and insightful ideas; extends and deepens some of what was learned; some "reading between the lines"; account has limited support/argument/data or sweeping generalizations. There is a theory, but one with limited testing and evidence.
Naive	A superficial account. More descriptive than analytical or creative; a fragmentary or sketchy account of facts/ideas or glib generalizations; a black-and-white account; less a theory than an unexamined hunch or borrowed idea.

# Evaluation criteria: Application

The Application rubric has been taken from Wiggins and McTighe's "Rubric for the Six Facets of Understanding".

<b>Levels of Application shown in my portfolio web site.</b> (The wording here has <u>not</u> been modified for use with middle school students.)	
Masterful	Fluent, flexible, and efficient; able to use knowledge and skill and adjust understandings well in novel, diverse, and difficult contexts.
Skilled	Competent in using knowledge and skill and adapting understanding in a variety of appropriate and demanding contexts.
Able	Able to perform well with knowledge and skill in a few key contexts, with a limited repertoire, flexibility, or adaptability to diverse contexts.
Apprentice	Relies on a limited repertoire of routines; able to perform well in familiar or simple contexts, with perhaps some needed coaching; limited use of personal judgment and responsiveness to specifics of feedback/situation.
Novice	Can perform only with coaching or relies on highly scripted, singular "plug-in" (algorithmic and mechanical) skills, procedures, or approaches.

## Method: Portfolio Web Sites

- Students download the web site template to their network user accounts.
- The web site template contains a Home page plus one page for each subject
- Students transform the template by adding animations, images, color schemes, stories, and artifacts of what they have learned. Each student's portfolio becomes unique.
- Each subject page contains links to digital artifacts. These artifacts are the evidence of learning and serve as an assessment of each student's depth of understanding.

# Technology:

- MS FrontPage is the web authoring tool.
- Artifact template has two forms
  - Those containing videos use a template that has a plug-in for a video clip.
  - Those containing still images use a template made in PowerPoint which is then converted to PDF with PDFCreator.
  - Cameras: Kodak model C-813 are used for both still images and video clips.

# The Process:

In theory only. Currently teachers have not yet adopted this process. Adoption will happen (hopefully) in a year or two.

- Students and teachers are organized in teams.
  - Core subjects: Math, Science, Social Studies, and Exploratory Studies.
  - Students collect examples of their work in all courses.
  - At the end of the assessment term, students make digital artifacts from their collection of work.
  - Students also write a reflection on their growth as learners using these artifacts as evidence.
  - Teachers advise students on their selection of topics to archive.
  - Students and teachers evaluate the collection of artifacts using the Self-Knowledge rubric.

# The Process, continued:

- Contents of artifacts:
  - Reflective writing: what did I learn?, how did I learn it?, why is that important in my life?
  - Evidence of understanding: still images or video clips of student work.