

KEEP toolkit *Project Practices*

How to Begin

1. Focus on particular aspects of teaching or learning.

In order to keep your snapshot focused, concentrate your thinking on particular issues of teaching and or learning. You will want to clearly connect your goals, reflections, outcomes, and/or evidence to the learning and/or teaching of one activity. In other words, try not to include too many ideas in one document.

2. Look at other templates

Creating a template is similar to preparing an outline. Whether a scholar is working alone or is a part of a larger group, the process of deciding which aspects of one's work to highlight is a first step in deciding what to post online. Read other people's Snapshots, posters, and portfolios to get an idea of what you may want to include. See the KEEP Toolkit Case studies page for examples:
<http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/kml/KEEP/cases.htm>.

3. Compare your goals to others

Which aspects of your teaching and learning would you like to share on the Web? What can others learn from you and your practice? As you look at other representations of teaching and learning, think about how your plans compare and use others' starts as a way to construct your own, unique template.

4. Understand the pieces of your work

Begin to classify the parts of your work into categories such as context, questions, activities, outcomes, evidence, and resources. Your list will change, of course, depending on the issue you want to highlight and the story you want to share. The important thing is to think about how the pieces of your work fit together and which ones are most important to share.

What to Include

1. Include or ask for enough contextual information for an interested stranger to understand the purposes and goals of the entire project.

Recall that the completed snapshot will be a public document for many to see and share; so, include in the template of the title box prompts for the author's name, institution, logo or photo, and a brief description of the overall project. This language could read something like this:

"In the fall of 2006, [INSERT NAME] developed a ____ Project as part of the _____. _____. created this process to encourage _____. This Snapshot presents [INSERT NAME] 's project on ..."

2. Include specific contextual information to distinguish an individual's work.

As described above, the title box may provide information for understanding why the Snapshot was created; the first box (usually, the upper left box) should provide information about what this particular snapshot contributes to a larger project or idea. Therefore, offer prompts in your template to ensure that the author will use the first box to provide a summary or overview of the individual's work. The overview should be a brief statement that addresses who, what, when, where, and why of the project. Other boxes on the snapshot should address specific goals, activities, evidence, and outcomes.

3. Include boxes for goals, descriptions of activities, supporting materials, reflections, and contact information

The heart of your snapshot will be a presentation of your goals, activities, reflections, and evidence of change. Make sure you provide boxes for this information as well as some way to contact the author, should a reader want to learn more. Keep in mind that the Snapshot serves as a portal to layers of other information; so, allow the boxes to capture the key components of your practice that can be explored more deeply through links to other websites, documents, charts, images, and video.

How to Organize

1. First things First

Similar to writing an essay, provide context and purposes toward the top of your Snapshot. Readers should understand and be aware of why they are being introduced to your ideas, and, generally, people read web-pages like they do paper-based materials and need important information first.

2. Provide Clues of what is to come

In the center of your snapshot, provide boxes to delineate your project goals, to highlight your main sources and examples of evidence, to show diagrams of your conceptual thinking, and/or charts showing your results and outcomes. These boxes should provide concise descriptions, summaries of particular portions, and links to more elaborated versions of your work. The more detailed pieces of work could include documents, more images and charts, PowerPoint presentations, or other digital information.

3. Open yourself for feedback

Provide contact information toward the bottom right corner. Once people have read your piece, they may want to comment on your work.

How to Teach Others

1. Build on the common language of the project or group.

While the KEEP Toolkit promotes exhibition and exchange of knowledge about education and educational innovations, the languages of educational reform, teaching and learning, technological advancement are not common. Therefore, start with the vocabulary understood within your community and build on it. This may require explicit instructions for each prompt. For example, a prompt for reflection may need to include a clear description of the topic for reflection as well as the meaning of reflection—i.e. a thoughtful consideration of what it meant to do a certain task or think in a particular way, the questions that arose, alternative explanations for a particular result, and possible conclusions.

2. Provide explicit instructions.

Within each of the boxes, provide specific information about the kind of response you would like. First, clarify the prompt. For example, if you have a box for goals, expand the prompt with a sentence or two that describes which goals you want them to list.

Second, specify the form you want to have the response. If you would like participants to list their goals, you may want to provide the beginnings of a numbered list to signal your participants to limit their goals to 3-5. If you want something in paragraph form, instruct them to write a paragraph of no more than 75 words (to avoid long columns) and to link to other documents.

Third, encourage the effective use of photos, charts, and links. This web-based document will be more compelling if text is broken with visual images. In addition, long pieces of text can and should be shortened by linking to other documents that explain

further certain ideas.

Fourth, make sure your participants understand that they are publishing. This means that all references and photos must be properly cited and each piece of work must be checked for quality.

Provide these kinds of instructions within each box and ask participants to replace your text with their own.

Considering the Bigger Picture

1. Consider your larger goals and the bigger picture.

Before deciding the kinds of prompts you want to answer or your participants to answer, consider the mission and goals of your project. It will be important to reflect these ideas in your template in order to do three things: to remind participants of the purposes of doing a snapshot (to capture aspects of teaching and learning within a community), to facilitate discussions about the content of a group of snapshots, and to evaluate their effectiveness.

Similarly, consider the implications of publishing these snapshots on the web. As each participant completes a snapshot, he/she will have a published document that is available to many; so it is important to make sure that the content of these snapshots is compelling and of high quality.

2. Use the power of a web-based snapshot to improve communication, community building, and reflection.

Making public one's ideas, reflections, challenges, and processes of educational change can be a powerful tool for teacher improvement, student learning, and curriculum transformations. This practice of "going public" seeks to help communities gather and share information about which teaching practices, learning strategies, and tool use are most effective in which environments. Through this open sharing of information and reflection, the real discussion within a community can begin: How is Open Courseware used by different disciplines? How do students' goals for their capstone experience develop over time? What are the most convincing forms of evidence of learning among Historians in our Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project? Given shared information, faculty, project directors, students, and community members can discuss these kinds of questions within their own context, design next steps, gather more information, review the results, and share these results again.

This process of "going public" promotes participation, interaction, and community learning. One of the best ways to encourage and track on-going conversations is to combine your use of templates with communication or social software (such as wikis, or threaded discussion) to incorporate discussion and a rigorous exchange of ideas.

3. Expect an iterative process that endures over time.

The development of a template is one step in the process of reaching your goals of achieving a deeper understanding of your community's learning. As you and members of your community increase their knowledge base and build common language and rubrics for interpreting your snapshots, you most likely will need to re-design your templates, each time reflecting deeper understanding and expectations.