Mahara: Creating ePortfolios

By engaging in scholarly research, students enrolled in the Howard County High School G/T Research Program have joined a larger community of researchers and professionals. In order to provide additional opportunities for students to showcase this original research and communicate with others in the field of study, students in the G/T Research Program will develop an electronic portfolio (ePortfolio) using *Mahara,* a web-based portfolio development tool.

How it Works

Throughout this year, students will develop ePortfolios, which will include artifacts from their research studies. These artifacts include the research proposal, annotated bibliography, synthesis paper, reflection journals, presentations, and final product. As students create the ePortfolio, they will have the opportunity to share it with authentic audiences, including peers throughout the county, teachers, mentors/project advisors, and other professionals in the field of study. In this online collaborative community, students may follow friends' portfolios, provide portfolio feedback, and engage in countywide discussions. At the end of the year, students will be able to download their ePortfolio for viewing on any computer.

Terms and Conditions

Before using *Mahara*, please review the Terms and Conditions provided.

- No student or other participant may include any information or images on the site that could compromise the safety of him/herself or other online community member. Students may not include specific comments about location, schedules, phone numbers, etc. If participants wish to contact another student in the online community outside of *Mahara*, they should do so through the student's teacher.

- HCPSS staff will make every reasonable effort to monitor conduct within *Mahara* in order to maintain a positive learning community. All participants will respect each other's time and efforts by supporting the same positive approach.

- All participants will be respectful in their portfolios and postings. Any inappropriate language or comments will be addressed as per school system policy.

- All participants must protect their login and password information. If participants suspect that a password has been compromised, he/she must notify the teacher immediately.

- No participant may share his/her login information or protected information about the site with anyone who is not a participant. Participants will have the opportunity to share portfolios with outside audiences at a later date.

- Any participant who is aware of violations of this agreement by others must report these violations to the teacher or Mahara administrator immediately both verbally and in writing.

- All use of *Mahara* must be in accordance with the Howard County Public School System's Acceptable Use Policy, including entries made from computers outside of school.

- No portfolio or posting may facilitate or promote illegal activity, either overtly or by implication.

- All students and participants using *Mahara* must agree to the terms and conditions of this agreement.

Public Viewing of ePortfolio Pages

High school students using *Mahara* now have the option to make their pages public to audiences outside of Howard County Public School System. By making the ePortfolio public, various audiences, such as mentors, advisors, college admissions officers, and families, will have the ability to view the work posted by the student within the portfolio. Students will have the ability to determine which pages are made public, as well as for how long they will remain public.

In making the ePortfolio pages public, the students' collections would be searchable through search engines, such as *Google*. Therefore, as outlined in the original Terms of Use, students may not include personal information beyond their name and school. Personal information, including student phone numbers, home addresses, and school schedules, may not be included in the portfolio.

Even if select pages in the ePortfolio are made public, audiences outside Howard County Public School System will not have access to student information, profiles, forum discussions, or other pages that students have chosen not to make public.

When sharing the URL link to a *Mahara* ePortfolio by email, students must copy their teachers on the email message so that they are aware that the portfolio has been shared with an audience outside the Howard County Public School System. If students post their ePortfolio link to another website, the student must share the URL for the website with the instructor.

Consequences for Violation of Terms and Conditions

Any violation of the above terms and conditions shall result in the student's immediate termination from use of *Mahara*. Additional school-based consequences may also result from the student's actions depending on the particular situation.

Academic Integrity

Work published in a student's ePortfolio should represent a student's original work. Representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one's own constitutes plagiarism. If using work that is not a student's original creation, the student will adhere to the Educational Fair Use Guidelines for copyrighted material (provided in the attached chart). Academic integrity violations may result in an Honor Code and/or administrative referral.

Copyright of Student's Original Work

Students retain copyright ownership to any original student work posted within the ePortfolio unless they have licensed it or given others permission for its use.

I have read and understand the Terms and Conditions for using *Mahara*, the web-based ePortfolio tool, as well as the statement of Academic Integrity, the statement of Public Viewing, and the Educational Fair Use Guidelines.

_____   _____   _____
Student Name (Printed)   Student Signature   Date

I give permission for my son/daughter to use the *Mahara* ePortfolio program. Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

_____   _____   _____
Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)   Parent/Guardian Signature   Date