General Information about Project Share

What is Project Share?

Project Share is an innovative digital learning environment where teachers and students will communicate, collaborate, and access 21st century digital content. Through Project Share, teachers will have access to online professional development (PD) modules, professional learning communities, and digital content repositories.

Is Project Share a website?

No. Project Share is a collection of 21st century learning tools. PD modules will be provided through a single online platform powered by Epsilen, LLC.

What is Epsilen?

Epsilen is a centrally hosted learning management system that allows teachers and students to work and collaborate within an academic online environment.

Who is involved in Project Share?

The Project Share development team includes the Texas Education Agency, the New York Times, Epsilen, LLC, and the 20 Education Service Centers. To contact members of the Project Share team, you may send an email to Project Share mailbox at projectshare@tea.state.tx.us.

Will districts have to pay for access to Project Share?

Access to the Epsilen platform is available at no cost. Although Project Share is available to districts at no cost, time and effort by district staff will be needed to manage accounts.

Are districts required to participate in Project Share?

Participation in Project Share is voluntary. However, professional development modules and access to state-owned digital content and other digital assets will be available solely through the Project Share platform.

What about privacy and security when using the Project Share platform?

Project Share participants are subject to a Terms of Service agreement and to a Privacy Policy.

Everyone involved with Project Share is mindful of considerations of privacy and security when educators and students work in online environments. We are also fully aware of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and COPA (Child Online Protection Act) guidelines and will work within those requirements when students are invited into the Epsilen environment. Please keep in mind that teachers will be the first Project Share participants. A limited number of selected high school students will be invited into the Epsilen environment during the 2010-11 school year.

What is the timeline for Project Share?

Project Share will be introduced in phases. Phase I, scheduled for spring and summer of 2010, will include the following opportunities:

1. Professional Development
   - Science, Math, English Language Arts, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
   - English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)
   - College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS)
2. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
   - Discussions, collaboration, and sharing among educators
   - Ongoing learning opportunities for professional development participants
3. Access to a variety of repositories for use in professional development and classroom instruction
4. Planning for ePortfolio pilot to investigate student-created portfolios of coursework and other examples of academic and extra-curricular activities
5. Planning for ePortfolio assessment to explore new forms of evaluation of student work

Phase 2, scheduled for the 2010-11 school year, will include the following activities:

1. Launch ePortfolio pilot
   - To showcase work representing a wide range of student capabilities
   - To explore new forms of assessment
2. Expand digital content
   - State-owned open source instructional materials
   - Statewide licenses for instructional materials
3. Develop and deliver online courses through the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN)

Teachers and Access to Project Share

How will teachers use Project Share?

Initially, educators will be invited to join online professional learning communities and to participate in online professional development. The PD modules will include a multimedia approach and the integration of Web 2.0 tools. As Project Share progresses, teachers may have the opportunity to develop interactive courses for classroom use.

Will only teachers who participate in professional development have access to Project Share?

 While it is hoped that all teachers will take advantage of online professional development modules, districts will have the option to create teacher accounts within the Epsilen platform to meet other needs such as creation of online professional learning communities, access to digital content, and networking with other teachers.

When will teachers have access to Project Share?

TEA is currently working with the 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs) to begin inviting districts into the platform. Teachers will be the first participants to receive accounts. During the roll out, each teacher will receive an email notification and an invitation to participate in the Texas Tour 1.0, an online module designed to introduce first-time users to Project Share and the Epsilen platform. Students will be added in future phases, but the first year of Project Share is focused on the teacher.

Who will create the PD modules and other digital content offered to teachers?

Initial content will be developed by Education Service Centers (ESCs) and Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs). It is anticipated that as Project Share grows, additional partners will be selected to create content for teachers.

In addition to PD modules, teachers will also have access to numerous content repositories such as the New York Times, Smithsonian Education, and NASA Education. Discussions are currently underway with other content providers to add more digital content.

Students and Access to Project Share

Will students use Project Share?

During the 2010-2011 school year, the Project Share team will begin an ePortfolio pilot. Only selected high school teachers and students will be invited to participate in the pilot. As students build ePortfolios, teachers will monitor student progress and provide feedback.

As Project Share development continues, students may be allowed to participate in interactive, teacher-created courses built within the Project Share platform. Additionally, students may have access to the numerous content repositories. However, districts will make final decisions regarding creation of student accounts and what they will be able to access.

How can my district or school participate in the ePortfolio pilot?

A formal application process will begin in late spring/early summer 2010. Districts or schools selected to participate in the pilot will be contacted before the 2010-11 school year and will receive further instructions.