

Bringing a Graduate Profile to Life: A Blueprint

Working Draft - June 2021



Moving a Graduate Profile “from poster to practice” is hard work and takes years, but the rewards (improved student outcomes) vastly outweigh the costs. These research-based practices can guide adaptive strategies to advance.

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Authorship

With support from the above mentioned individuals and entities, this Blueprint was written by Roman Stearns, Founder & Executive Director of Scaling Student Success, a California partnership dedicated to educating the whole child. Learn more at <https://ScalingStudentSuccess.org>.



Version

This version of the Blueprint (June 2021) is an initial working draft. As the Scaling Student Success community of practice learns more and delves deeper into the work of breathing life into Graduate Profiles as a means of assuring that all young people in CA benefit from a whole child education, we will update this Blueprint & Toolkit to reflect a more refined set of promising practices and tools.

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

According to a [2014 report](#) by American Institutes for Research (AIR), 36 states and the District of Columbia had defined college and career readiness. In recent years, some have gone further and created a statewide Graduate Profile – see examples from [Virginia](#), [South Carolina](#), [Utah](#), and [New Mexico](#) – with several other states’ Profiles in development. California has done neither.

Lacking a CA state definition of student success, an increasing number of CA school districts are taking it upon themselves to engage community stakeholders to create a Graduate Profile (or Portrait of a Graduate). Often, districts feel compelled to do so because they believe that, while the Common Core Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, and the associated assessments build a necessary foundation for college and career readiness, the academic core, in and of itself, is not sufficient to holistically and equitably prepare all young people for future success.

Creating a Graduate Profile is a **critical first step** that lays a foundation for achieving improved outcomes for young people. It offers a renewed vision and shared definition of the college-, career-, and civic-ready student, serves as an impetus for shifting instructional practices and engaging students in deeper learning, and requires a shift in assessment that provides young people authentic ways to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Perhaps most important, when school boards and community groups endorse their Graduate Profile, they express the intent to hold themselves collectively accountable for a more equitable and holistic set of student learning outcomes to which they have agreed. It’s a promise to their students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the need to educate the whole child. It has elevated the importance of social-emotional learning (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision-making) as well as other success skills (communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, digital literacy, and more). Finally, the pandemic has laid bare the inequities prevalent in our education system, leading to heightened desire and need to dismantle and rebuild the oppressive and racist structures and processes that have sustained inequitable opportunities and outcomes.

In order to more equitably and holistically prepare young people for future success, districts participating in the [Scaling Student Success](#) community of practice are dedicated to **operationalizing their Graduate Profiles**, assuring that each and every student has an opportunity to develop and demonstrate the competencies articulated in their Graduate Profile. In short, they are committed to moving “from poster to practice.” This blueprint offers guidance on what that means and some initial thoughts about how to effectively do so. It is, and may continue to be, a *working draft* that evolves as we learn more as a community of practice.

Audience

This blueprint is intended for educational leaders and their community counterparts who assume shared responsibility for shifting education so that it is more equitable and better aligned with the skills, competencies, and mindsets that the community values as the emerging needs of our young people and larger society.

Purpose

This blueprint is not a prescription, as there is no one best way to transform education. But, there are widely accepted, research-based design principles and promising practices upon which we can rely. This blueprint is intended to offer a menu of the interdependent “parts and pieces” critical to actualize a Graduate Profile. The associated “how to” guide and toolkit will evolve over time. The resources and tools identified are intended to leverage the expertise of our Scaling Student Success partners and best practices from the field.

Let's Start with the Basics

As leaders, we need to acknowledge that **education is a human-centered** enterprise. Improving education, particularly for students who historically have been most marginalized, begins by applying liberatory design mindsets¹ -- processes and habits for approaching equity challenges and change efforts in complex systems. Instigating, shifting, and sustaining equity-based human behavior involves acts of being, learning and doing, all of which are not only intellectual, but also social and emotional.

Organizations eager to make systemic and sustainable progress must attend not only to the vision and actions, but also must put in place the **conditions that enable change**. Conditions may include cultural aspects of the organization, capable leadership, trusting relationships, work environments, financial resources, policy alignment, and more. We'll address many of these aspects in this high level guide.

Related Resources:

- [Liberatory Design Mindset cards](#) (from the National Equity Project and Stanford's d-school)

Organizational Structure - The Five Cs

At its heart, creating and operationalizing a Graduate Profile fulfills a **promise to students** to assure that they are well-prepared for future success. It also satisfies an expectation of the community that their young people will be ready to take on critical roles in order to advance social, political, and economic stability and growth. For educators, it represents a district transformation strategy that takes years. For all, if done well, it fulfills an obligation to work earnestly toward dismantling persistent structural inequities that have disproportionately disadvantaged Black, Indigenous, and other students of color (BIPOC).

This Blueprint maps out several interdependent phases of work that include the "Five C's":

Five Cs

This Blueprint maps out several interdependent phases of work necessary to realize the power and potential of a graduate profile to transform education, resulting in a whole child approach that more equitably and holistically prepares young people for future success.

- Coherent vision
- Communication strategy
- Culture & Conditions to enable progress
- Capacity to advance
- Continuous improvement



¹ See the [Liberatory Design Mindsets](#), co-created by one of Scaling Student Success' partners, the National Equity Project (NEP), in collaboration with Stanford University's design school (d-school).

Change Takes Time

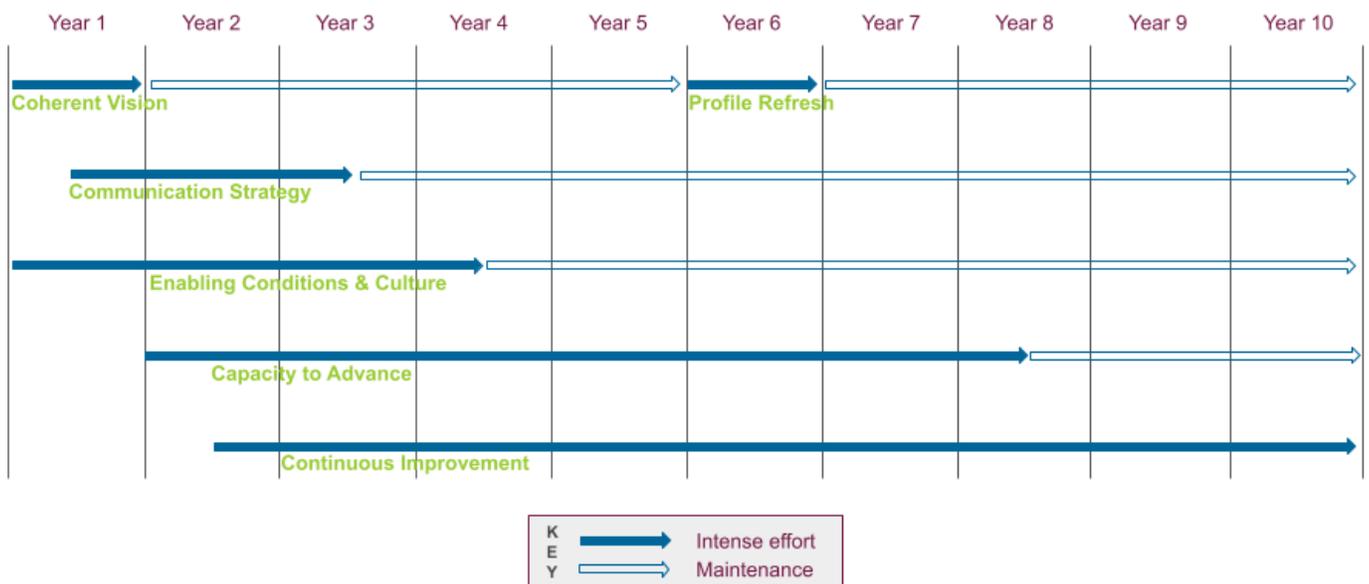
A Graduate Profile sets forth a bold vision. Making the Graduate Profile live and breath requires a deep investment by all staff and community stakeholders over an extended period of time.

Below is an approximate timeline for the interdependent phases of implementation.

Making a Graduate Profile live and breath requires...

Coherent Vision	Communication Strategy	Enabling Culture & Conditions	Capacity to Advance	Continuous Improvement
<p>VISION: Engage stakeholders to create a Graduate Profile that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endorsed by the school board and key community groups Designed to dismantle structural inequities and rebuild for equitable opportunities and outcomes Aligned with district's strategic plan, major initiatives, and community priorities Supported and resourced by LCAP goals Reflected in school WASC accreditation goals, Single Plans for School Improvement, and other guiding documents 	<p>COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Graduate Profile is visible across the district and community All stakeholders embrace and understand the Graduate Profile Stakeholders can articulate <i>why</i> it is important and <i>how</i> they help to advance it It is ever-present at meetings of the school board, district leadership, site administration, teacher teams, community members and student groups 	<p>CULTURE & CONDITIONS: Leadership promotes and models a culture that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is based upon and builds trusting relationships Values public learning for adults and students in physically and emotionally safe learning environments Insists on equity and shared accountability Allows and encourages students and staff to experiment and innovate 	<p>BUILD STAKEHOLDER CAPACITY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students increasingly have voice, choice, and agency to set goals, pursue plans, and monitor their progress on Grad Profile outcomes Teachers establish relationship-based classrooms and use pedagogical and assessment approaches that allow students to regularly practice and demonstrate the Graduate Profile competencies Administrators set and articulate the vision, create an enabling culture, assure supportive conditions, and allocate funds to enable all stakeholders to advance the Graduate Profile Families and community partners are engaged and empowered to participate in student learning and assessment, as well as decision-making that supports the Graduate Profile 	<p>CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: Use "street data" - artifacts from lived experiences - to inform frequent cycles of inquiry to assess and address needs, reflect, and review</p> <p>At least annually, use available data to conduct a comprehensive assessment to ascertain the below and adjust plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levels of stakeholder engagement and empowerment Student progress on outcomes Adult capacity to advance the vision How the culture and conditions support progress

Operationalizing a Graduate Profile takes time



It can be daunting to think about a long trajectory of continuous improvement in order to achieve a desired outcome. Sometimes it's helpful to have a picture of what it looks like when a Graduate Profile is fully operationalized. While there are several schools and districts, even states, that have moved along the journey and can share illustrative videos, case studies, and artifacts, no district in the U.S. (that we are aware of) can profess to "being done." That said, Appendix A captures a bulleted list of what full operationalization might look like. It's a picture of a future state.

If the outcomes articulated in the Graduate Profile truly reflect a "North Star" that guides the district, then rather than thinking about its realization as "one more thing," it becomes the organizing structure into which most other initiatives and programs are folded to assure alignment and coherence.

While all five phases are essential, "capacity to advance" constitutes the lion's share of the investment in terms of time and resources. For that reason, the largest section of this Blueprint is dedicated to that phase.

Related Resources:

- [Slides: The five C's and implementation timeline](#)
- [Appendix A: Description of a fully implemented Graduate Profile](#)

THE FIVE C's

Coherent Vision

WHY CREATE A GRADUATE PROFILE?

A school district's vision and mission statements serve an important purpose. By design and intent, they typically are quite brief, providing high level guidance, but not much more. Increasingly in California and across the country, to supplement the vision and mission, school districts have engaged their community stakeholders to create a Graduate Profile (or Portrait of a Graduate) to more fully describe the skills, competencies and mindsets necessary for young people to be ready for success in college, career, and civic life. Once completed, the Graduate Profile serves as a North Star to guide shifts in organizational culture, curriculum and instruction, assessment and accountability, and leadership and decision-making. It more holistically and equitably defines student success.

WHAT IS A GRADUATE PROFILE?

A Graduate Profile (or Portrait of a Graduate) typically is a succinct one-page colorfully-designed document that captures the skills, competencies, and mindsets that the community values most for their students. Most are informed by research-based reports as well as community input, and typically address four interrelated groups of competencies:

- College-ready scholar and lifelong learner
- 21st century skills, or the “4Cs” of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity
- Social-emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making
- Culturally-competent and active citizen

The Graduate Profile is elegant in its simplicity -- easily understood by anyone glancing at it for even a few seconds. Immediately, any stakeholder -- whether a parent, business leader, college dean, faith leader, teacher or student -- will see the value and importance of students making progress toward mastering the identified competencies.

While the Graduate Profile is typically a one-pager, “bringing it to life” may involve the development of many associated documents and tools -- i.e., descriptors, benchmarks, rubrics, adult profiles, system profiles, decision trees, report cards, presentations, communication collateral, and more.

Related Resources:

- See [this gallery](#) for examples of Graduate Profiles (or Portraits of a Graduate) from across the country.
- See [this spreadsheet](#) linking to dozens of Graduate Profiles across California, organized by county.

HOW TO CREATE A GRADUATE PROFILE?

Many individual consultants, private consulting groups and non-profit support providers have developed expertise in helping districts to co-design and co-facilitate an inclusive process to create a Graduate Profile. Most processes rely on robust stakeholder input (i.e., forums, focus groups, surveys), from a broad-ranging group of stakeholders (students, family members, teachers, school and district staff and administration, civic and community leaders, business and industry representatives, faith leaders, postsecondary partners), particularly those whose voices historically have been marginalized.

The process begs us to ask:²

- How do we best equip ALL learners for tomorrow’s workforce?
- How do we best prepare them to be empathetic, adaptive, and lifelong learners and productive contributors to their communities and the nation?
- How do we cultivate learner agency and pathways while also investing in our learners’ overall well-being?

In some cases, a district moves beyond a student profile. Recognizing that adults in the system must be able to model the skills and mindsets to students, create classroom environments to nurture advancement of Profile outcomes, and facilitate learning experiences that allow students to practice the competencies on a routine basis, some districts create an “adult profile” to wrap around the student profile. Furthermore, acknowledging that school and district leaders must create the conditions and culture for teachers to promote the Graduate Profile outcomes in students, some districts establish a “systems profile.” This guide addresses all levels: the “capacity to advance” section highlights the areas for teacher development, and the “culture and conditions” section attends to the system shifts that leaders create to enable both teachers and students.

Related Resources:

- [Prospect Studio](#) - a San Francisco based consulting firm that facilitates a visioning process resulting in a student profile, adult profile, and system profile. See examples from [Santa Clara](#) and [Portland OR](#).
- [Envision Learning Partners](#) - A Bay Area non-profit focused on supporting schools and districts to develop systems of performance assessment, part of which includes creating a Graduate Profile
- [Battelle for Kids](#) - a Ohio based non-profit with a toolkit to support districts to create a Portrait of a Graduate

WHY OPERATIONALIZE A GRADUATE PROFILE?

In many communities, a school district moves with good intentions to create a Graduate Profile, defining the skills, competencies, attributes, and mindsets their young people must demonstrate in order to be prepared for future success. However, too often, the Graduate Profile merely hangs on the walls of offices and/or classrooms as an aspirational poster or lives on the district website as a colorful page adjoining the district’s vision. In and of itself, a poster has never changed student outcomes or professional practice. In order to make good on the intentions of the broad-ranging stakeholders who contributed to the creation of a Graduate Profile, it’s critical to move “from poster to practice” or “from rhetoric to reality.”

This blueprint will not get into details of how to create a Graduate Profile, as those resources are readily available. However, it’s critical to understand that the process for creating a Graduate Profile is, in and of itself, a representation of the district’s values and intentions. It is the starting point for modeling the communication strategies and shifting organizational culture, both described below. Through the Graduate Profile development process, how will the district and community:

- Value multiple stakeholder groups by sharing leadership and decision-making?
- Commit to equity by centering voices of those who historically have been most marginalized?
- Lean into students’ voices and grant them agency to define a vision for their own education?
- Dismantle white dominant culture by avoiding customary characteristics?³
- Promote a culture of experimentation, rapid prototyping, and continuous improvement?
- Be transparent in its intentions and communications?
- Remain human-centered in its processes?

² From [An American Imperative: A New Vision of Public Schools](#) (AASA, The School Superintendents Association, created by Learning 2025: A National Commission on Student-Centered Equity-Focused Education; 2021)

³ See “Showing up for Racial Justice” - [white supremacy culture characteristics](#)

The primary purpose of this guide is to support districts in their efforts to operationalize a Graduate Profile, or move “from poster to practice.” Only when districts have done so will students, families, communities, and larger society benefit from the results of a whole child education.

Communication Strategy

SHIFTING MINDSETS

In many ways, creating a Graduate Profile is the easy part. It can be accomplished with limited input from representative stakeholders that reflect diverse voices across the district and community. Operationalizing a Graduate Profile is substantially more challenging, as it requires engaging *all* stakeholders, encouraging them to embrace and support the Graduate Profile as the North Star -- guiding learning and development for each and every student, both in and out of school. In many ways a Graduate Profile is designed to shift expectations about what students should know and be able to do and shift mindsets about where, when, and how student learning takes place.

Given that expectation, communications becomes a central feature of any strategy to operationalize a Graduate Profile. While communicating consistent and persistent messages to teachers, administrators, and other school and district staff is primary, the communication strategy also must extend to the larger community, including families, community and civic partners, support providers, business and industry leaders, nearby postsecondary institutions, and more. If we agree that learning happens any time, anywhere, then the Graduate Profile outcomes must be fostered in school, at home, and in the community.

REACHING AND ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

A communications plan should include consistent messaging, like a drumbeat, across the community. It helps if the Graduate Profile is:

- Publicly displayed in multiple languages in the community (i.e., city buildings, cafes) as well as in school and district offices and classrooms
- Highlighted routinely in district communications collateral, including brochures, website, reports, plans, events, and more
- Referenced in day-to-day conversations among all stakeholders, including those among teachers, families, and students
- A central driver for decision-making, as evidenced by its role in board presentations as well as school- and district-level discussions about programs, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

When a communication strategy is effective, all stakeholders (students, teachers, staff, administrators, and community members) will be able to clearly articulate *why* the Graduate Profile is important, *what* they are doing to support it, and *how* they have advanced/achieved the outcomes articulated in the Profile. An effective communication strategy also will regularly report on progress and challenges and showcase and celebrate examples of students demonstrating the sought-after skills, competencies, and mindsets.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [San Francisco USD videos](#) celebrating students demonstrating Grad Profile competencies

NAVIGATING CHANGE

Creating and pursuing a high level communication plan may seem straightforward, but a winning strategy will simultaneously humanize the work by recognizing that change can be scary. Nothing is more critical during times of change and transition than effective communication. Research has found that the communication that matters the most in times of change is the communication that employees receive from their leaders.⁴ After all, school staff are the messengers to students, families, and community members. They are the “feet on the ground,” so to speak.

According to William Bridges’ influential book *Managing Transitions*, one of the best ways leaders can effectively deal with the normal anxiety that’s brought on by change, as well as accelerate the transition process of their team is to thoroughly explain “The Four Ps,” which are:

PURPOSE

Why are we doing this? What problem are we solving? What are we trying to accomplish? People often need to understand the logic of a change before they can change.

PICTURE

What is the end game? How is it going to work? What is changing and what isn’t? People often need to imagine what the change will look like before they can give their hearts to it.

PLAN

What is the road map for getting to where we need to go? What is going to happen over the next X months? What happens first, second, third? People need a clear idea of how they are going to get to where they need to go.

PART

What is my role? How will I be involved? Do I have an opportunity for input into the plan? When will I be trained? People need a tangible way to contribute.

By providing information about the four Ps in all communications, district leaders can help their team understand why a change is necessary, what it looks like, how they are going to get there, and how they fit in.

Keep in mind that during times of transition, communication isn’t just about sharing information. It’s also about using communication to connect with staff, students, and community stakeholders, letting them know you care and building their commitment to the change.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- *Appendix B: Sample messages*

Culture & Conditions to Enable Change

Transforming education to more equitably and holistically prepare young people for future success requires establishing a conducive culture and the right conditions to enable change. It is important to do so at all levels of the system, from classrooms and schools, organizationally across the district, as well as in the community.

⁴ Much of what follows was adopted from <https://www.linkageinc.com/leadership-insights/the-4-ps-of-change-and-transition/>

START WITH EQUITY & STUDENT VOICE

The year 2020 challenged and changed all of us. Our families and friends suffered from illness and death. Students learned and parents worked from home, uprooting familiar lifestyles. We watched with anger the senseless killing of George Floyd (and a long list of others) at the hands of white police officers. We saw and/or participated in protests demanding racial justice. In California, many of us were affected by unprecedented wildfires and related power outages and unhealthy air quality. All of this required tremendous resilience. It also led to a healthy reset to humanize our interactions -- asking about the wellbeing of family and friends, bringing our true selves to conversations, and interrogating our own inherent biases.

The challenges also motivated us to more aggressively take action to address the structural inequities in our education system that for decades we have observed, and perhaps tinkered to adjust, but not fully dismantled. As we recover and rebuild, we have an opportunity to center equity and the voices of the most marginalized students, families, and communities. As we do so, we should examine and prioritize “street data” -- i.e., artifacts from the lived experiences of stakeholders -- over the less immediate and relevant “map data” (e.g., literacy levels, rubric scores, satisfaction surveys) or “satellite data” (e.g., standardized test scores, attendance patterns, graduation rates).⁵ See more about these types of data in the Continuous Improvement section below.

By centering the voices of marginalized students and their families, we can redesign learning and begin to dismantle racist and oppressive structures that for decades have led to inequitable opportunities and outcomes. “Building back better,” requires substantial investment in the capacity of teachers, leaders, other staff, and community members. These capacities, described in the next section, are facilitated when there is an enabling culture.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- *Scaling Student Success* [equity stance](#), describing how operationalizing a Graduate Profile intentionally dismantles structural inequities
- Appendix C: [Five steps to start lucid dreaming](#) (from XQSuperSchool)

CREATE AN ENABLING CULTURE

Culture, whether of a society, nation, region, tribe, community, family, or organization, is determined by a set of adopted norms and expectations, typically valued and prioritized by leaders and members. Changing culture is an intentional act, dependent on shifts in leadership style, modeling, processes, structures, communications, behavior, attitude, and more.

Schools, like society at large, are guided by a white dominant culture. If the goal is to move gradually over time toward a way of being and doing that is culturally and linguistically sustaining for students and families on the margins, then leaders will have to model the behaviors that they expect to see in staff, students, and community members. For example, by using an inquiry and learning stance, giving voice and agency to marginalized students and families, interrogating inherent bias, and taking intentional action, leaders can be genuine and transparent, even vulnerable, as they attempt to navigate complex change processes. It’s never too soon to start. Executive and instructional coaches can help guide the transition.

In efforts to operationalize a Graduate Profile, the following elements can foster healthy shifts in organizational culture:

⁵ In their book, *Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation*, authors Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan distinguish between “satellite data,” “map data,” and “street data.” They argue that now is the time to take an antiracist stance, interrogate our assumptions about knowledge, measurement, and what really matters when it comes to educating young people.

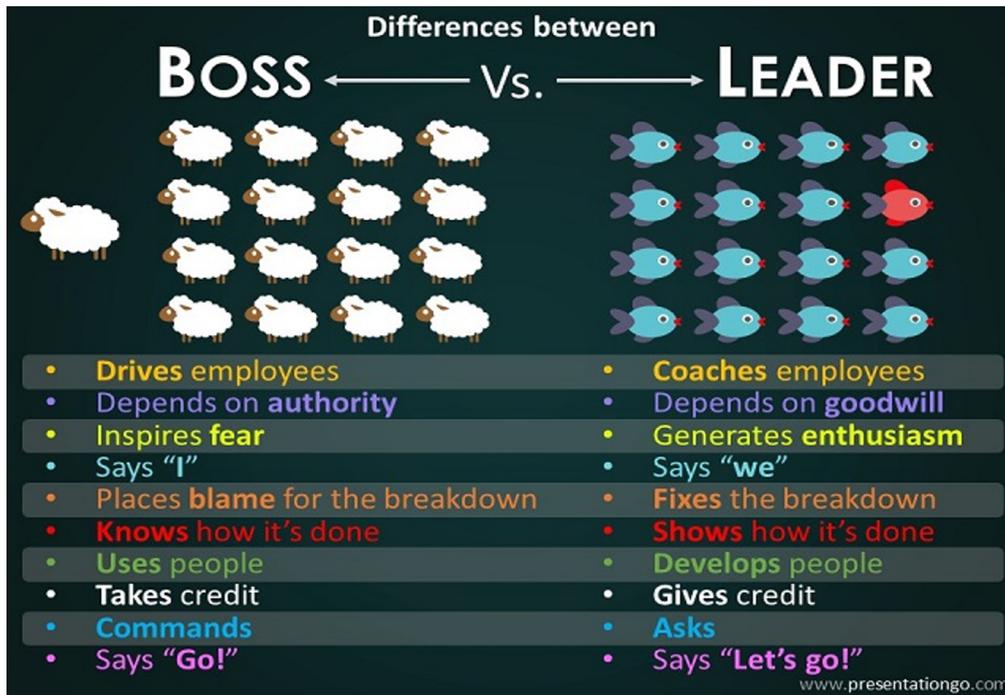
- **AUTHENTIC VOICES** - By giving voice to marginalized students, families, and communities, leaders demonstrate authentic interest in centering equity. By listening empathetically and valuing multiple perspectives, even if those views may not be consistent with their own, leaders demonstrate their willingness to question their inherent biases and interrogate how the white dominant culture has resulted in oppression and institutionalized racism. Ultimately, while taking time to listen, being inclusive and collaborative takes more time, leaders will find that a larger percentage of stakeholders will embrace the direction, plans, and strategies determined. Every effort should be made to be as inclusive as possible, and remind individuals and organizations of the open invitation.
- **TRANSPARENCY** - Centering marginalized voices and publicly grappling to combat persistent and harmful inequities promotes transparency. It shows that the growth process is open and that there is nothing to hide. By transparently sharing our intentions, processes, and desired outcomes, we can stay focused, address dissension as it arises, and avoid attempts at sabotage that sometimes result from less transparent processes. It's helpful to err on the side of too much information rather than not enough, even to the point of showing vulnerability, which helps in building trust.
- **TRUST** - Education is human-centered. It is based on trusting relationships among and between students, teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and partners. By making an effort to connect personally with others, being open about fears and hopes, honest about capacity, and vulnerable about missteps, we can build trust, which is the foundation for effective collaboration. "Change moves at the speed of trust."
- **COLLABORATION** - From large multinational corporations to small tech start-ups, collaboration has been demonstrated in recent decades as the preferred method for getting results. The same is demonstrated to be true for the non-profit and public sectors of society, including schools. When we establish the right conditions (i.e., structures, processes, relationships) for effective collaboration - among and between students, teachers, administrators, families, and other partners - we open doors that enable us to optimize learning and progress. Like any skill, collaboration must be modelled, taught, and practiced before we can expect regular and effective execution.
- **CURIOSITY & INQUIRY** - When we give ourselves and others time and space to wonder, we foster creativity and exploration of new or different ideas. When we start classes or meetings with essential questions, we inspire deep thinking and vibrant discussions, a rich source of learning. Moving from thought and talk to action, experimentation allows individuals and teams to pursue creative ideas resulting from their curiosity and inquiry.
- **EXPERIMENTATION** - Change is difficult. If there were a silver bullet or easy-to-follow prescription, we would have applied it long ago. At all levels of the system, change includes trying things on, testing what works, gathering user-centered data on results, and making informed adjustments. Experimentation should not only be tolerated, but encouraged, even celebrated, as long as it is well-intentioned and well-informed with equity in mind. The popularity of design thinking (i.e., ideation, user-centered input, rapid prototyping) has led to valuing experimentation as a critical component for advancement. While experimentation has its benefits, it must be paired with a culture of continuous improvement in order to remain focused on achieving targeted goals.
- **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT** - Simply put, continuous improvement means learning from earlier iterations and making advances. It can be done in simplistic, informal ways or more rigorous, formal ways (i.e., improvement science). Whatever the preference, for any related piece of operationalizing a Graduate Profile, it's important to gather data, analyze it, and apply the results to inform improvement. Creating processes and structures for routinely reflecting on efforts, examining data, asking critical questions, and applying results to iterate and advance can facilitate routinized practice.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [Seventh Circle of Human Experience](#) (National Equity Project) - an expansion of Margaret Wheatly's work on the "6 Circle Model" blending the technical and relational aspects of change.

INVEST IN TEACHERS

At the outset, it's critical that leaders publicly acknowledge that every educational reform is built on the shoulders of teachers. Teachers are our greatest asset. In order to spread and sustain change, we must invest in them -- their happiness, working conditions, and professional growth. We must create safe and supporting environments so that teachers can be highly effective. To do so, we must protect them and set them free to experiment, collaborate, and learn. In order to model the behaviors we want to see in our teachers, it's extremely helpful for leaders to "walk the talk." The graphic below is an instructive representation of the kind of leadership that caters to enabling change and building teacher capacity and agency.



ASSURE FISCAL AND POLICY SUPPORT

District leaders signal their values and priorities through financial and policy decisions. Elevating the importance of more holistic and equitable outcomes for students (i.e., those articulated in a Graduate Profile) must be intentional and visible. When good intentions are not supported by financial investments and enabling policies, stakeholders begin to question why a leader's words are not backed by actions. To examine any potential disconnect, consider the following questions:

- How are whole child goals reflected in the district's guiding documents that form the basis of accountability structures -- i.e., Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), the WASC schoolwide learner outcomes, Single Plan for School Improvement, district strategic plan, union agreements, among others?
- What percentage of district resources (financial, personnel, time) are dedicated to fostering and realizing the Graduate Profile outcomes for students and the enabling conditions that support adults?

- Which school board policies and district procedures enable the culture, conditions, and capacity to advance articulated in this guide? Which district policies hinder progress? Why? How can those roadblocks be removed?

While breathing life into a Graduate Profile and making the outcomes the North Star for every student's education requires participation by all stakeholders, the work must be driven by a high-ranking leader who has the right skill set to manage the change process. That leader must work with a core team and activate hundreds of others to engage in the work, but major efforts only succeed when responsibility is assigned and resources follow.

Capacity to Advance

While all of the “five C’s” in this guide are essential, building individual and organizational capacity to advance efforts toward full operationalization of a Graduate Profile represents the lion’s share of the work. As referenced above, it’s most critical to build the capacity of teachers, but it’s also important to build the leadership capacity of site and district administrators, as well as the capacity of other school staff, parents, family members, and community members to participate as full, committed partners.

Operationalizing a Graduate Profile is pioneering work. It’s experimental. There’s no one right way to do it. That said, we can learn lessons from other states across the country that are further along in their journeys. The areas of work addressed below should be considered as a menu of options to be taken on gradually over time. Eventually, all may be essential, but districts will be well-served by identifying the one or two areas that they believe will have the greatest impact and serve as effective levers for further change.

To decide where to start, you may wish to consider the following questions:

- What dynamics are at play in the community? Which lever(s) for change may be most welcomed and/or embraced by key stakeholders?
- What needs have been elevated by the pandemic? How are key stakeholders eager to advance -- i.e., equity, student agency, flexible scheduling, competency-based education?

As we “build back better,” there are several potential starting points to create equitable, student-centered and asset-based conditions for learning, including, but not limited to shifting instruction to be more engaging and relevant to students, assessing student progress by expecting them to demonstrate their competency, establishing classroom environments free of long-standing inequities rooted in white dominant grading and behavioral policies, and recognizing the value of expanded learning (after school, summer) to complement school-based opportunities for students to practice and demonstrate Graduate Profile outcomes.

The ultimate goal is nothing short of transforming learning in a way that builds student agency, putting them in the driver’s seat to be inspired and supported to pursue their passions and make a difference in the world. This section begins with a couple of process recommendations, followed by resources for creating safe and equitable classroom environments, and ends with resources for shifting practices in instruction, assessment, and accountability. Taken together, they support strategic growth toward Graduate Profile implementation.

BUILD FROM ASSETS

In order to choose a starting point, it often makes sense to build from strengths that are broadly embraced by the community. Every school district has tremendous assets upon which to build. Leveraging existing strengths is often the best starting point. For each piece of the work described below, district leaders may wish to begin with these questions:

- What are we doing well?
- What have we learned from those successes?
- How do they align with and/or inform our interest in bringing our Graduate Profile to life?
- How can we leverage those assets to advance our work?

LEAD WITH ADULT LEARNERS⁶

In order to move “from poster to practice,” adults throughout the system must embrace, model, and actively promote the Graduate Profile outcomes that they foster in their students (i.e., symmetric learning). Operationalizing the Graduate Profile is complex and requires more than routine expertise from teachers and leaders. To realize the promised outcomes, systems must address the social and emotional competencies that are assumed in collaborative professional learning. Practitioners must cultivate safe and supportive environments, strengthen relationships, and build adaptive expertise and mindsets through continuous learning from collaboratively reflecting on what’s happening for students in their classrooms. When educators practice public learning, grapple with uncertainty, question assumptions and implicit biases, and co-learn with their students, all learners are more likely to develop and demonstrate Graduate Profile outcomes.

- How can we create the conditions for adult learning so that educators publicly and routinely display the mindsets and practices articulated in our Graduate Profile?
- How can we leverage practitioner agency, curiosity, experimentation, and capacity to facilitate deeper learning that promotes Graduate Profile outcomes among students?

One of the Scaling Student Success partners, [Lead by Learning](#) (formerly Mills Teacher Scholars), has created a succinct [playbook](#) for creating the conditions for adult learning. The playbook highlights four key mindsets and four practices, listed below. They provide a healthy framework to guide capacity-building efforts.

Mindsets	Practices
What are your beliefs about adult learning? How do they show up in the conditions for learning?	What are you trying to do? What is the change that you want to see?
Teaching, leading, and learning are uncertain and complex work	Use data to make learners’ experience visible
Equity requires questioning assumptions	Supportively challenge colleagues
Learning is fundamentally social and emotional for adults as well as students	Practice public learning
Agency and purpose drive curiosity and deep learning	Make sense of goals collectively

Over time, educators may face multiple challenges as they breathe life into a Graduate Profile, including, but not limited to discussing antiracist grading policies, comparing teacher-generated rubrics in order to agree on common rubrics against which to assess student progress, and interrogating student work in order to calibrate

⁶ Much of this section is borrowed from [Lead by Learning](#) (formerly Mills Teachers Scholars), a partner of Scaling Student Success

teachers' judgments about a student's level of competency. Without a healthy culture of adult learning, these discussions can be fraught with dissent, defensiveness, and even unprofessional outbursts. On the other hand, with a spirit of shared learning and a culture of collaboration, these discussions may be productive, even transformative learning experiences.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [Leading by Learning: A Playbook for Creating the Conditions for Adult Learning](#) (Lead by Learning, 2019)

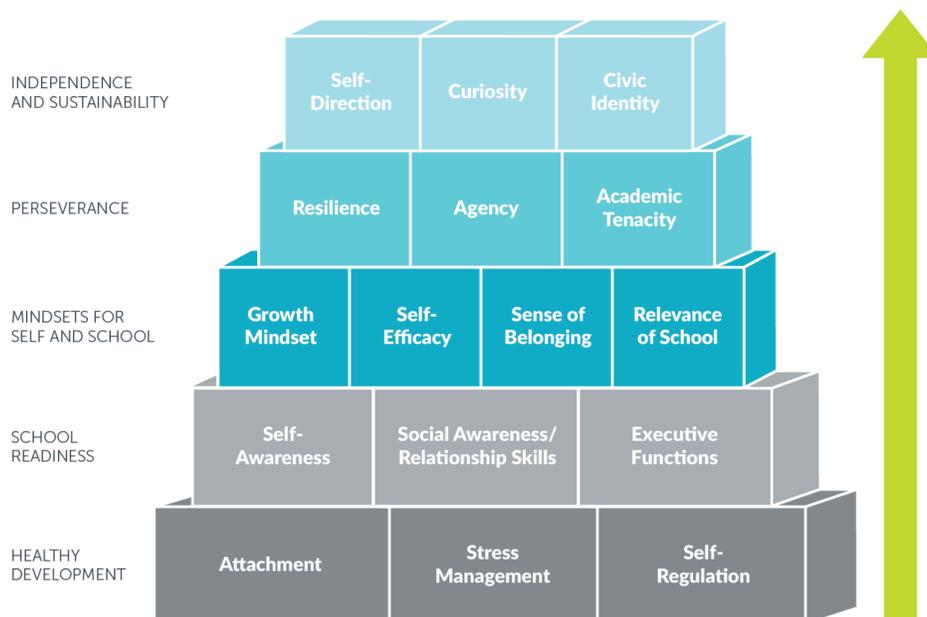
CREATE SAFE AND EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Create welcoming, safe classroom environments where students experience a sense of belonging, trusting relationships, and increasing degrees of agency to guide their own learning

Students learn best when they are in safe, calm, and supportive environments, have a sense of belonging, and benefit from trusting relationships. When teachers and classmates know them well, celebrate uniqueness and difference, and support their growth, students are more willing to take healthy risks and find joy in learning. In contrast, brain science tells us that when students (in fact, people of all ages) suffer from chronic levels of stress, feel threatened or fearful, or are affected by other forms of adversity, they may shut down and be unable to develop healthily and achieve academically. For this reason, it's essential for teachers to create a safe and supportive learning environment, free from abusive language, punitive discipline, bullying, and other counterproductive behaviors that can undermine trust, confidence, learning, and growth.

[Turnaround for Children](#) offers their [Building Blocks for Learning](#) as a framework for the development of skills children need for success in school and beyond.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR LEARNING



Each element represents a set of evidence-based skills and mindsets that have been proven by research to strongly correlate to, and even predict, academic achievement. The framework draws from research in multiple fields to suggest movement from lower-order to higher-order skills. Overall, it provides a rigorous perspective on what it means to intentionally teach the whole child – to develop the social, emotional, motivational and cognitive skills in every learner.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [Building Blocks for Learning](#) from *Turnaround for Children*

TEACH AND SUPPORT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SEL)

*Teach and support **social and emotional development** to help students become more self-aware, self-regulated, and socially aware and responsible*

As defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL is a process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

These SEL skills are captured as valued in every Graduate Profile. Below are a few examples:

- Is self-directed. Perseveres through difficult tasks. (Evergreen SD)
- Recognize and respect the differences in values that may exist between themselves and people from other countries or from varying social and cultural backgrounds. (Davis JUSD)
- Sets and monitors goals for continuous growth. Manages time effectively. Embraces challenges with a growth mindset. Advocates for self and takes responsibility for learning. Practices self-reflection and self-regulation. (Novato USD)
- Understand their own and others' cultural heritage. Use their cultural knowledge to engage in a diverse world. (Pasadena USD)
- Students are healthy, resilient and confident individuals with knowledge and skills about self-care tools and tactics that foster mental and physical wellness. They manage stress and anxiety through practices that promote a balanced lifestyle of good nutrition, exercise, sleep, and setting boundaries. (Santa Clara USD)

The pandemic has elevated the importance of attending constantly to the social and emotional needs of young people. According to recent YouthTruth surveys⁷ of 85,000 students, feeling depressed, stressed, or anxious has risen to the number one obstacle to learning (46%). Hispanic or Latinx, multiracial, and Black or African American students faced more obstacles on average than did white or Asian students. There is common agreement that attention to SEL must precede expectations that students will be ready to learn and achieve at high levels (i.e., Maslow before Bloom).

While important for students, the pandemic also raised the importance of attending to the social-emotional needs of educators. After all, only when teachers feel safe, supported, balanced, and inspired, can they be

⁷ See [Students Weigh In, Part II: Learning & Wellbeing During COVID](#) (YouthTruth, 2021)

present and fully engage students in a way that supports their healthy growth and development. By establishing human-centered practices across the school, districts can address the needs of both students and educators.

Research has shown that social and emotional competence can be enhanced using a variety of classroom-based approaches such as explicit instruction, teaching practices, and curricular integration. High quality SEL instruction is sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. Effectively integrating SEL schoolwide involves ongoing planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement by all members of the school community. SEL efforts both contribute to and depend upon a school climate where all students and adults feel respected, supported, and engaged.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [CA Social Emotional Learning Statewide Group](#) (wealth of resources on CA Educators Together)
- [CASEL Framework](#)
- [SEL Roadmap](#) (CASEL)
- [Transformative SEL as a Lever for Equity and Social Justice](#) (CASEL)
- [Rising Up Together: Spotlighting Transformative SEL in Practice with Latinx Youth](#) (CASEL)

COMBAT RACISM WITH POSITIVE BEHAVIOR POLICIES

*Shift punitive **behavioral policies** to asset-based restorative justice practices used to positively impact school culture, discipline, and academic success*

According to YouthTruth student surveys, 60% of students believe discipline isn't fair. Too often, punitive disciplinary policies can undermine the development and maintenance of safe and supportive learning environments. Even more concerning, research shows that these policies disproportionately affect Black, brown, and poor students, representing one of several long standing racist and oppressive structural inequities. Teachers, schools, and districts can begin to dismantle these inequitable policies and practices by pursuing one of several strategies that have become increasingly popular in the last decade, among them:

PBIS - Increasingly, schools and districts have relied on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and other similar programs to build teacher, leader, and systemic capacity to promote a culturally-responsive asset-based approach to promoting positive behavior, rather than punitive approaches that tend to be applied unequally and negatively affect children of color.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE - A specific behavior intervention approach, often part of a PBIS system, restorative justice (also referred to as restorative practices), empowers students to resolve conflicts on their own and in small groups. By bringing students together in peer-mediated groups to talk, ask questions, and air their grievances, programs have helped to strengthen campus communities, prevent bullying, and reduce conflicts -- all of which leads to reductions in suspension and expulsion rates, as well as students reporting being happier and feeling safer. Increasingly, it is being used in CA schools as an alternative to zero tolerance discipline approaches, which tend to be applied in ways that inequitably and negatively impact BIPOC students.

RELATED RESOURCES::

- [CA PBIS Coalition](#)
- [PBIS.org](#)
- [Restorative Justice resources](#) compiled by Edutopia

SHIFT TO ANTIRACIST GRADING POLICIES⁸

*Change **grading policies** to allow redos and retakes and reflect student mastery over time through narrative feedback, rather than asserting inequitable forms of power and control by including behavior, participation, homework, and other criteria not related to student demonstration of mastery*

When we talk about grading, we’re talking about culture. Grading practices should reinforce a safe, supportive learning environment, not undermine it by being used as a tool by teachers to assert power or control. It does not matter how a school talks about diversity and equity; if idiosyncratic and uncalibrated grading practices allow some teachers’ grades to be influenced by implicit bias, the students will get the message loud and clear that some are seen as more capable of learning than others. It does not matter how many posters about growth mindset and grit are on the walls of a school; if the teachers, through their grading systems, are sending messages such as “once you fail, there is never a way back” or “I don’t care; it’s your fault,” then students will perceive that the talk of growth mindset is hollow.

Conversely, if students share a perception that teachers assign the grades that students earn through hard work, and that teachers will support them until they can demonstrate mastery, then students will develop a belief that they can build on their mistakes and keep learning. The goal is for schools and districts to ensure that their grading and reporting systems help them build a nurturing, equitable, creative, and dynamic culture of learning.

The purpose of a grading system is to give feedback to students so they can take charge of their learning and to provide information to all who support these students—teachers, special educators, parents, and others. The purpose of a reporting system is to communicate the students’ achievement to families, post-secondary institutions, and employers. These systems must, above all, communicate clear information about the skills a student has mastered and the areas where they need more support or practice. When schools use grades to reward or punish students, or to sort students into levels, imbalances in power and privilege will be magnified and the purposes of the grading and reporting systems will not be achieved.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [Great Schools Partnership: Grading & Reporting for Educational Equity](#)
- [Grading for Equity](#) (Joe Feldman, 2019)
- [12 Tips for Antiracist Grading](#) (Shane Safir, 2021)
- [Webinar recording: Antiracist Grading](#) (Safir & Dugan, 2021)
- [Vermont Proficiency-based Grading Practices](#) (Vermont Agency of Education)

ADVANCE TOWARD A COMPETENCY-BASED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

*Advance toward a **competency-based** system of education that grants students agency over their own learning -- setting goals, monitoring progress, accessing supports, and demonstrating competency in a culturally and linguistically sustaining way and timeline*

⁸ Much of the information on grading and reporting practices comes from the Great Schools Partnership in New England.

By design, a Graduate Profile is **outcomes-based** -- that is, it defines the knowledge, skills, competencies and mindsets that we expect for young people to *demonstrate their readiness* for future success in college, career, and civic life. District Graduate Profiles typically are silent on inputs used to foster the development of those outcomes. This is intentional. It creates freedom and flexibility for students, teachers, and community members to design and determine culturally-appropriate learning experiences. It encourages student voice and choice. Most important, it opens the door to grant students agency over their own learning.

A **competency-based** (also referred to as proficiency-based or mastery-based) system of education moves beyond the industrial age model of education where students move through in batches, spending the same number of hours to complete a set curriculum. This outdated system, defined by seat time and Carnegie units, runs counter to what research tells us about how students learn. A competency-based approach allows students to set goals, monitor their progress, access supports when needed, and demonstrate competency in a culturally and linguistically sustaining way and timeline. It puts students in the driver’s seat, promoting critical skills like self-management, independence, and responsibility.

Adopted from “The Lindsay Story: Confronting the Status Quo and Creating a New Vision for Learning,” the table below describes the differences between traditional (time-based) and performance-based systems of education.

Traditional (time-based) system	Performance-based system
Movement (to new topic/lesson) based on time	Movement based on mastery of content
Learning takes place only in the classroom	Learning takes place anytime, anywhere
Driven by textbooks	Driven by needs of learners
Teacher-centered decision-making	Learner-centered decision-making
Focus on learning basic skills in different subject areas	Focus on critical thinking and problem-solving skills across content areas
Teacher is the only judge of quality student work	Self, peers, teachers, administrators, other stakeholders judge student work
Prepares learners for industry-age jobs	Prepares learners for 21st century jobs

California trails most states in moving toward a competency-based system, in part because admissions to the state’s public colleges and universities are based on completion of the 15 courses that make up the “a-g requirements,” which are perceived to be “seat time” dependent. However, University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses regularly admit students from schools, both in and out of state, that use competency-based approaches. Pioneers in CA include Lindsay Unified and Big Picture Learning schools.

“People learn in different ways and different time frames.”

Lindsay Unified guiding principle

In order to sustain the cultural and linguistic diversity of CA students, honor the unique strengths and needs of young people, and put agency in the hands of learners, we should feel compelled to advance toward a competency-based system of education, despite both the perceived and real policy and structural barriers to doing so.

RELATED RESOURCES::

- [Lindsay Unified's Strategic Design](#) (Lindsay USD, revised 2019)
- [The Lindsay Story: Confronting the Status Quo and Creating a New Vision for Learning](#) (Lindsay USD, 2019)
- Other case studies and stories about Lindsay Unified from [Aurora Institute](#), [EdSurge](#), [Forbes](#)
- [CompetencyWorks resources](#) (Aurora Institute)
- [A Cornucopia of Competency-Based Education Resources from Vermont](#) (Aurora Institute)

FACILITATE ENGAGING AND RELEVANT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

*Shift **instructional methods** to become increasingly student-centered and relevant, engaging and project-based*

Most Graduate Profiles name core academics as one of many outcomes. Often, it's the only content focused outcome, when others -- like collaboration, creativity, and leadership -- relate to skills, competencies, and mindsets. Needless to say, students cannot become skilled collaborators unless they have plenty of practice collaborating. They cannot learn leadership skills without opportunities to lead. And, students cannot learn

creativity without multiple chances to express themselves in creative ways. These skills are content neutral. To facilitate student development and demonstration of Graduate Profile outcomes, it could be argued that *how teachers teach is more important than what they teach.*⁹

The Graduate Profile itself is designed to be **student-centered**, i.e., prioritizing student voice and choice, building agency, and supporting a competency-based approach to learning that allows students to set their own goals, monitor progress, and demonstrate outcomes in the culturally and linguistically appropriate fashion and timeline. In order to grant students agency over their own learning, teachers must become a *guide on the side, rather than a sage on stage*, creating the right conditions for learning, facilitating powerful deeper learning experiences, and supporting and coaching students to persist and meet their potential.

Many instructional methodologies promote such a role for teachers, including project-based learning (PBL), work-based learning (WBL), and other forms of experiential learning.

Project Based Learning (PBL) is an increasingly popular teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects. While many teachers design and assign projects to students, California-based [PBL Works](#) supports teachers, schools, and organizations to follow their comprehensive, research-informed [seven essential project design elements](#) (Gold Standard PBL) to improve, calibrate, and assess their practice. The seven design elements include:

A Challenging Problem or Question

The project is framed by a meaningful problem to be solved or a question to answer, at the appropriate level of challenge.

Sustained Inquiry

Students engage in a rigorous, extended process of posing questions, finding resources, and applying information.

Authenticity

The project involves real-world context, tasks and tools, quality standards, or impact, or the project speaks to personal concerns, interests, and issues in the students' lives.

⁹ Quote credited to Aaron Eden, founder, The Eliad Group

Student Voice & Choice

Students make some decisions about the project, including how they work and what they create, and express their own ideas in their own voice.

Reflection

Students and teachers reflect on the learning, the effectiveness of their inquiry and project activities, the quality of student work, and obstacles that arise and strategies for overcoming them.

Critique & Revision

Students give, receive, and apply feedback to improve their process and products.

Public Product

Students make their project work public by sharing it with and explaining or presenting it to people beyond the classroom.

Work-based Learning (WBL) is an instructional methodology often associated with career-technical education (CTE) and/or college and career pathways. Ranging from career awareness (i.e., videos, classroom speakers, field trips) to career exploration (i.e., worksite visits, informational interviews, research) and career preparation (i.e., job shadows, internships, apprenticeships, industry-aligned projects), WBL offers powerful opportunities for students to practice Graduate Profile outcomes, often in a real-world setting with a real-world audience.

While historically rooted in CTE, there is no reason for WBL to be limited to these settings and learning environments. In fact, some highly touted educational innovators, like Big Picture Learning and High Tech High,

regularly use internships and other forms of WBL as a regular form of high leverage, high impact learning across academic and technical content areas.

RELATED RESOURCES::

- [Lucas Educational Research studies \(2021\)](#) on the effectiveness of project-based learning
- [Gold Standard PBL \(PBL Works\)](#)
- [Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning: Definitions, Outcomes and Quality Criteria \(2012\)](#)
- [Student Internships \(ConnectED\)](#) video from Palmdale High School in Antelope Valley UHSD

Civic learning and engagement has recently been elevated in California with the approval of the Seal of Civic Engagement. The [C3 Framework](#) calls out four dimensions to deliberately promote high quality civic learning in all learning contexts. These include:

- **INQUIRY:** begin with a compelling question that is intellectually meaty, relevant and interesting to students, and will compel them to investigate a myriad of answers and solutions.
- **INVESTIGATION:** dig into the content of a complex issue, past and present, to search for answers by applying research and analytical skills to examine the social, political, historical, economic, environmental, ethical, and other trends and influences in decision-making.
- **CIVIL DIALOGUE:** engage in civil and respectful dialogues to reveal multiple perspectives around controversial issues to arrive at a conclusion; then, to communicate their conclusions in a variety of ways – speaking, writing, and using various forms of media.
- **INFORMED ACTION:** take effective, practical, and appropriate informed action on conclusions they have drawn by addressing issues and problems in the real world today.



These instructional or learning practices enable students to learn about civic and political issues, discuss and deliberate those issues while considering multiple viewpoints, and work with others to take informed action to address real world problems in any discipline.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [State Seal of Civic Engagement Implementation Roadmap](#) (APT Work Group)
- [State Seal of Civic Engagement](#) and [Resources to Support Civic Engagement](#) (California Dept of Educ)
- [C3 Framework: College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#) (National Council for the Social Studies)

ALIGN OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING WITH IN-SCHOOL LEARNING

*Align **out-of-school learning** with in-school learning to expand the opportunities for students to practice and demonstrate Graduate Profile outcomes*

The outcomes articulated on a Graduate Profile are expansive. Neither students, families, nor educators should expect young people to have ample time to practice and demonstrate these competencies within the boundaries of the classroom, clock (during the 8:00 - 3:00 school day) or calendar (during the 180 day school year). Rather, there should be an intentional effort to align learning that happens at school, at home, and in the community so that all of them foster a student's advancement in the critical skills named on the Graduate Profile.

Circling back to the communications section above, it helps if all community members are not only aware of, but enthusiastically embrace the Graduate Profile. Ideally, each stakeholder group would have conversations about how they can facilitate formal and informal learning experiences, support student progress, and even contribute to assessing outcomes. These forums may be beneficial among after school program staff, summer learning providers, parents, work-based learning supervisors, employers who hire high school students, leaders of community-based and faith-based organizations, coaches, class and club advisors, activity directors, field trip docents, and others who interact directly with students.

Over the years, the [Partnership for Children and Youth](#) has reinforced the value and need to support social-emotional learning during expanded learning.

Leaders can promote alignment when contracting with after school providers, summer program directors, field trip hosts, industry partners, and others. Leaders may also wish to include key community partners in professional development sessions when teachers and instructional coaches are grappling with how to assess student progress, calibrate judgments using common rubrics, and support students in posting portfolio artifacts.

By expanding the circle of youth-serving providers who foster student progress toward the Graduate Profile outcomes, the broader community becomes aligned in supporting student readiness for future success.

RELATED RESOURCES::

- [The Quality Standards for Expanded Learning in California](#) (CA Afterschool Network)
- [Infographic: Social-Emotional Learning in Expanded Learning Programs](#) (Partnership for Children & Youth)
- [Finding Common Ground: Connecting Social-Emotional Learning During and Beyond the School Day](#) (Partnership for Children & Youth, 2016)

USE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TO MEASURE STUDENT PROGRESS¹⁰

*Implement systems of **performance assessment** that use both formative and summative performance tasks as a means for students to demonstrate their progress and mastery of Graduate Profile outcomes*

Graduate Profiles typically include outcomes that are difficult to measure using traditional test-based assessments. For example, a student's ability to demonstrate competence in the "4Cs" -- communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity -- as well as common Graduate Profile competencies like media literacy, research, and civic engagement, cannot easily be determined through a paper-and-pencil test, but they can effectively be assessed through performance assessment -- the demonstration and evaluation of applied skills that can be taught and learned. Simply, performance assessment is when someone shows what they can do and that demonstration is checked against a standard of quality.

A driver's test is a common example. For a driver's permit, one only needs to pass a written exam to prove basic understanding of content knowledge. But, the DMV would never put a driver on the road until he passes a behind-the-wheel test to show that he can apply the rules of the road under authentic circumstances. The driving test is a *performance assessment*, as would be a dance audition, a soccer tryout, an art portfolio, a persuasive essay, or a science experiment.

Assessment both informs instruction (formatively) and evaluates learning (summatively), making growth evident to each individual student as well as to the teacher throughout the learning process. [Envision Learning Partners](#) defines high quality performance assessment as:

- Eliciting evidence of learning that matters
- Tight on its criteria of success
- Open to different learner approaches
- Authentic
- A learning experience in and of itself

In addition to formative assessments, schools and districts with Graduate Profiles often require students to complete a culminating assessment -- such as a senior project, portfolio defense, or exhibition -- as a way for students to demonstrate their competency of several Grad Profile outcomes. To do so effectively, schools and districts create, adapt, and/or adopt common rubrics against which to assess student progress. In order for these assessments to be consistent, teachers must examine student work together and calibrate their scoring in order to assure that ratings are equitably applied. While challenging, such a calibration process has proven to be a powerful professional learning experience, forcing teachers to check their assumptions and biases, discuss what determines quality, and learn from and with colleagues.

Performance assessments get the best results when positioned as formative and summative measures of a whole aligned system of teaching and learning rooted in students demonstrating skills and knowledge that matter. Establishing a high quality Graduate Profile is the basis of alignment for a high quality performance assessment system.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [Envision Learning Resource Bank](#)
 - [Defending Learning](#) (Envision Learning Partners)
 - [Rubric Rules of Thumb](#) (Envision Learning Partners)

¹⁰ Much of the below content is borrowed liberally from [Envision Learning Partners](#).

- [High Quality Performance Assessment is...](#) (Envision Learning Partners)
- [Los Angeles USD: Realizing the Graduate Profile through Portfolio and Defense](#) - resource 'placemat'
 - [Session recording](#)
 - [Eliana's Defense](#) (student)
- [LAUSD Linked Learning Portfolio Defense website](#)
- [Performance Assessment Profiles](#) (CA Performance Assessment Collaborative, Learning Policy Institute)

USE STUDENT SURVEYS TO ASSESS PROGRESS ON SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES

While student progress on many outcomes articulated in a Graduate Profile can be authentically assessed through performance assessment, others are harder to measure in any kind of rigorous way. Typically, a Graduate Profile will list a number of social-emotional outcomes, such as empathy, resilience, self-awareness, social awareness, self-reliance, curiosity, integrity, and others. Some of these attributes may be self-assessed through student surveys offered by most districts.

There are many survey tools available. In CA, the most popular include those of Scaling Student Success partner YouthTruth, as well as the CA Healthy Kids Survey, CORE Data Collaboratives social-emotional skills survey, and Panorama, among others. Each district would have to map the topics on those surveys with the outcomes articulated on their Graduate Profile to determine which standard set of questions aligns best. That said, ideally, a provider would help a district customize survey questions to cater specifically to the outcomes on

the Graduate Profile in order to regularly gather data that helps students, families, and educators determine the degree to which a student is able to exhibit progress toward a descriptive standard for each outcome.

If and when student survey data is triangulated with peer, family and teacher surveys, we can get a more well-rounded view of a student's demonstration of a particular Graduate Profile attribute, disposition, or mindset. Survey data can also be supplemented by observational data of a student's behavior and language. While not yet developed, there could be a phone app that would allow family members, friends, neighbors, coaches, workplace supervisors, and other youth-serving professionals and community members to rate and comment on a student's demonstration of Graduate Profile outcomes. See this [blog post](#) for further exploration of this idea.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [ExploreSEL](#) - A compendium of tools available to measure SEL
- [YouthTruth Surveys](#) - validated survey instruments and tailored advisory services
- [CA Healthy Kids Survey](#)
- [CORE Data Collaborative](#)
- Blog post: "[We all deserve badges for resilience and adaptability](#)"

BUILD A SYSTEM OF SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

*Shift to a system of **shared accountability** that assures the district and community hold themselves collectively accountable for each and every student to develop and demonstrate the competencies articulated on the Graduate Profile*

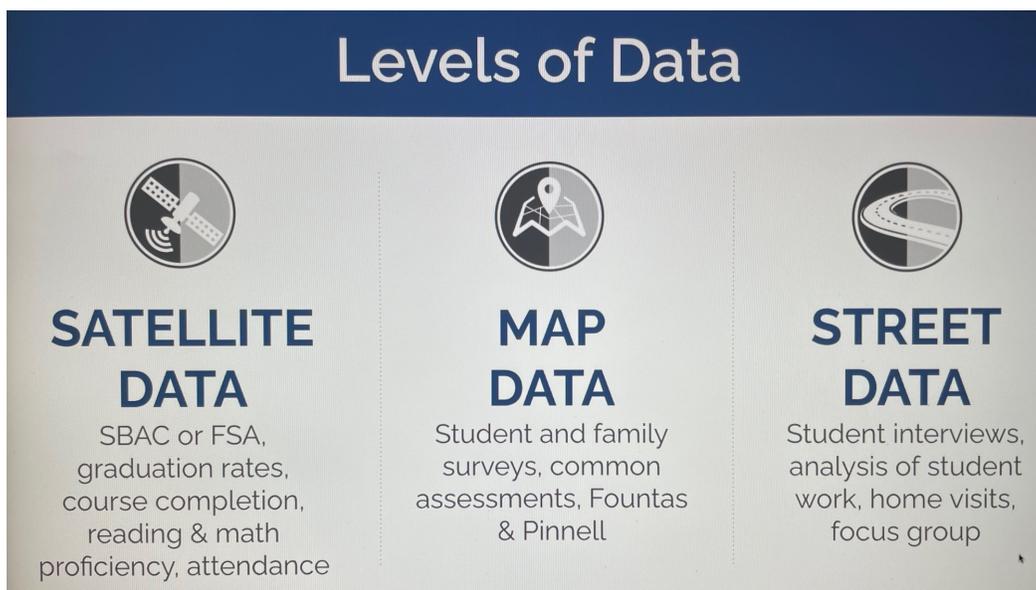
For a Graduate Profile to drive transformative change, the district and community must share accountability in a way that assures that each and every student has an equitable opportunity to both develop and demonstrate the competencies articulated on the Profile. Accountability may take several forms, both formal and informal.

Often, districts will begin by adding the Graduate Profile outcomes to student report cards, which (at minimum) calls attention to the outcomes to students, teachers, and parents several times per year. These ratings on report cards become more rigorous and meaningful when they are backed by a high quality system of performance assessment with teacher calibration around common rubrics. Shifting the nature of report cards and transcripts can be a powerful driver for change. In many ways, a high school transcript is the “currency of education.” If it is changed to reflect an updated set of desired student outcomes, we could see a domino effect of changes through the system. To explore further, see this [blog post](#), entitled “It’s time to change the currency of education.”

A district can demonstrate its seriousness by incorporating its Graduate Profile as a key component of its Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), setting goals, listing associated actions and metrics, and allocating resources to several of the components of Profile operationalization described throughout this blueprint.

To hold teachers, administrators, and other staff accountable, a district and its unions can agree on processes to incorporate attention to the Graduate Profile into staff goal setting, peer reviews, walkthroughs, professional development, and formal performance evaluation processes. The Graduate Profile also can be incorporated into hiring practices by referencing it in job descriptions, making it the topic of interview questions, and/or asking prospective teachers to teach a sample lesson focused (in part, at least) on promoting Graduate Profile outcomes.

The district can incorporate Graduate Profile related data indicators into its regular process of data collection, analysis, and reporting. Of course, having the data is only valuable if district and community stakeholders interrogate the data and use the findings to make decisions and inform continuous improvement. When examining data, it’s important not only to use (what Safir & Dugan refer to) “satellite” and “map” data, but also “street data” -- the qualitative, asset-based and experiential data that emerges at eye level and on lower frequencies, building on the tenets of culturally responsive education by helping educators look for what’s *right* in our students, schools, and communities.



Leaders can promote accountability by using the Graduate Profile as a North Star to align not only the LCAP, but also the strategic plan, single plans for school improvement, WASC schoolwide learner outcomes, and other guiding documents.

Finally, school boards can request that district leaders offer regular updates on their process and progress to breathe life into the Graduate Profile. Keeping it on the front burner of board meetings will raise awareness of community members, prioritize the Profile's central role and value in preparing young people, and hold district leaders accountable for supporting the various facets of actualizing the Profile.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation](#) (Safir & Dugan, 2021)
- Blog post: "[It's time to change the currency of education](#)"

LINKED LEARNING

In California, engaging community stakeholders to craft a Graduate Profile began with [ConnectED: The National Center for College and Career](#) in the early 2010's when generous funding from the James Irvine Foundation enabled the CA-based technical assistance provider to direct the CA Linked Learning District Initiative. Following the lead of Edwin Diaz, former Superintendent of Pasadena USD, ConnectED supported all nine medium and large districts participating in the initiative to create Graduate Profiles. As ConnectED expanded across CA and the nation, creating a Graduate Profile became the standard starting point for systemic transformation work. And, a movement began.

For those inexperienced with college and career pathways, or Linked Learning, it's a comprehensive systemic reform strategy that incorporates many of the Graduate Profile implementation strategies described in this blueprint. Schools are organized around a handful of career-themed pathways, such as engineering, digital media, health, and law and justice. Several hundred students move as a cohort through their academic and technical courses during a four-year program of study, which is supplemented by work-based learning (WBL) experiences and student supports necessary to foster success. A cross-disciplinary team of teachers collaborate to design and facilitate projects aligned with the pathway theme. Business, industry, and community partners support teachers and students by offering WBL experiences and serving on an advisory board. Students are motivated by the relevance of their program offerings as they prepare simultaneously for both college and career.

Over time, pioneering districts (Long Beach, Oakland, Pasadena, Porterville, Sacramento, West Contra Costa, and others) expanded the number of college and career pathways and academies. Porterville Unified offers 14 [open choice pathways](#) across five high schools serving about three-quarters of their students. They have invested heavily in WBL and one-on-one internships for all students to develop and demonstrate competencies articulated on the [PUSD Graduate Profile](#). Long Beach Unified has gone to "[wall-to-wall](#)" pathways across all of its high schools, embedding student projects and WBL into the student experience to actualize the [LB College & Career Graduate Profile](#) in order to achieve their goal to "transform the diploma from a certificate of completion to a 'Passport to Opportunity'."

ConnectED supported all districts in the initiative through a process of rolling out high quality pathways, the mechanism by which districts operationalized their Graduate Profiles. Often, pathways crafted specialized versions of the Graduate Profile catered to the career theme. They benchmarked the outcomes, created or adopted rubrics against which to assess student progress, designed cross-disciplinary real-world projects that embed performance tasks for students to practice the outcomes, and assessed student progress using both formative and summative forms of performance assessment.

Cohorting students into smaller learning communities for four years, supported by a core team of teachers who come to know each and every student well over the course of the pathway program creates a positive environment for addressing students' social and emotional needs -- i.e., trusting relationships, sense of belonging, and safe and supportive classroom environments. Very often pathway students and teachers describe the pathway as a family. Like other schools and programs, college and career pathways still must overcome long-standing inequities. However, the close-knit pathway community creates a safe environment for key stakeholders to challenge their assumptions, surface inherent biases, and adapt structures and processes that value differences and honor identities in ways that are culturally and linguistically sustaining.

To learn more about Linked Learning, visit [ConnectED: The National Center for College and Career](#).

Continuous Improvement

As stated earlier, operationalizing a Graduate Profile is pioneering work. It's experimental, relying on trial-and-error, healthy risk-taking, innovation, and an inquiry mindset. As such, gathering various forms of data is critical to enable frequent cycles of data-informed inquiry to assess needs, planning to address needs, execution to solve needs, and reflection and review.

Short cycles of feedback require the use of readily available data. For continuous improvement efforts to remain focused on students, particularly those on the margins, we must train ourselves to discern "street-level data" (Safir & Dugan, 2021)¹¹ -- i.e., the qualitative, systemic, and experiential data that emerges at eye level and on lower frequencies. Street data are artifacts from the lived experiences of stakeholders. Street data is asset based, building on the tenets of culturally responsive education by helping educators look for what's right in our students, schools, and communities instead of seeking out what's wrong. Street data embodies both an ethos and a change methodology that will transform how we analyze, diagnose, and assess everything from student learning to district improvement to policy. It offers us a new way to think about, gather, and make meaning of data. It calls for what Paolo Freire deemed a pedagogy of liberation (Freire, 1970).



Safir & Dugan differentiate "street data" from "map data" and "satellite data." Map data hover closer to the ground, providing a GPS of social-emotional, cultural, and learning trends within a school community (e.g., literacy levels, rubric scores, satisfaction surveys). Satellite data hover far above the classroom and tell an important but incomplete story of equity (e.g., test scores, attendance patterns, graduation rates). Our education system has relied far too heavily on satellite data, which typically is collected and reported annually, thus not accommodating short cycles of improvement. Safir & Dugan argue that now is the time to take an antiracist stance, interrogate our assumptions about knowledge, measurement, and what really matters when it comes to educating young people.

To advance efforts to operationalize a Graduate Profile, districts should incorporate "street data" and work to build routine processes of continuous improvement into the fabric of their operations at all levels -- individual practice, projects, programs, classrooms, schools, departments, and systems.

RELATED RESOURCES:

- [Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation](#) (Safir & Dugan, 2021, Corwin Press)

¹¹ Street Data: A Next-Generation Model for Equity, Pedagogy, and School Transformation (Shane Safir and Jamila Dugan, 2021)

APPENDIX A: START WITH THE END IN MIND

What does it look like to fully operationalize a Graduate Profile?

As a Graduate Profile becomes more than a poster on the wall, it serves as a...

Vision and guide: The Graduate Profile...

- Is recognized as a vision, foundational document, North Star (guide), and a promise to students
- Serves as a rationale to advance programs and initiatives (i.e., pathways, PBL, professional development, performance assessment, internships, maker space, equity work, etc.)
- Is endorsed publicly by community groups (i.e., chamber of commerce, city council, etc.)

Driver for equity: The Graduate Profile...

- Demands equitable outcomes on a broader definition of student success
- Moves beyond the simplistic “college for all” rhetoric
- Expects student voice, choice, and agency, especially among the most marginalized
- Challenges the status quo -- effective implementation demands dismantling structural inequities that for decades have led to systemized racism and oppression (i.e., standardized tests, grading policies, discipline policies, SpEd designations, and more)

Central feature of communications: The Graduate Profile...

- Is omnipresent, publicly displayed in the community (i.e., city buildings, cafes) as well as in school and district offices and classrooms
- Is referenced in day-to-day conversations among all stakeholders, including those among teachers, families, and students
- Is highlighted routinely in district communications collateral, including brochures, website, reports, plans, events, and more
- Is a central driver for decision-making, as evidenced by its role in:
 - Board presentations, with images and words to emphasize its importance / value
 - Ed Svs Dept discussions re curriculum, instruction, assessment, program investments
- Outcomes can be clearly articulated by all stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators, community):
 - Why the Graduate Profile is important
 - What they are doing to support it, and
 - How they have advanced/achieved the outcomes articulated in the Profile

Guide for practice: The Graduate Profile lives in district practice with teachers, counselors, parents, and others

- Students use “I can...” statements to describe areas of strength, growth, and aspiration
- Students demonstrate progress through exhibitions, defenses, etc., making learning visible/public through high profile, high value events
- Teachers use it to create accommodating classroom environments, plan lessons, and facilitate learning experiences
- Site administrators and teachers unpack the outcomes with benchmarks and rubrics
 - Student demonstration forms a basis for data collection, in addition to standard markers
- Administrators use it to design/arrange teacher professional development and guide walkthroughs
- Site/district administrators and school board use it to set goals and drive decisions

Form of shared accountability: The Graduate Profile defines what all students across the PreK-12 continuum can demonstrate:

- Students can articulate what they've done to demonstrate competencies
- Teachers teach to and assess competencies, without assuming outcomes based on inputs
- Administrators support adults to build their capacity and establish enabling conditions
- All stakeholders can view tangible evidence of student progress on the outcomes
- Data systems, including "street level" data, enable regular reporting of student progress

Organizer for systems alignment and program coherence: The Graduate Profile...

- Assumes a major presence in the LCAP, school site plans, and district strategic plan
 - As a way to bring coherence and alignment
 - As a technical tool and leverage for resourcing the work
 - With concrete actions aligned with, and intended to achieve, Graduate Profile outcomes
- Is used by decision-makers as the underlying core logic for systems design (i.e., DNA)
 - Develop systems, structures, and features of the institution to translate the Graduate Profile to teacher and student behaviors

**APPENDIX B:
SAMPLE COMMUNICATION MESSAGES USING THE 4 P's**

Every district will move down its own path to actualizing their Graduate Profile, based on their unique context. For that reason, messaging likewise will be customized to align with district needs and strategies, as well as leadership styles and preferences. That said, the below sample messages may be instructive as district and community leaders consider and customize their communication strategy.

P U R P O S E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the academic core is necessary, it is not sufficient to fully prepare our young people for future success. Students also need to demonstrate other competencies, like... • Our local employers demand that students entering the workforce, whether after high school or college, can... < list related Graduate Profile outcomes >. • To succeed in college, beyond being “book smart,” students must be able to... < list related Graduate Profile outcomes >. • Whether students choose to go to college, a career, or other worthy pursuit, they will need to be able to demonstrate some competencies that are universally valued, such as... < list related Graduate Profile outcomes >.
P I C T U R E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten years from now, we expect that students will be able to practice and demonstrate their Graduate Profile competencies both in school and in the community • Learning will be more experiential, through projects, promoting collaboration and teamwork, creative and critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, use of resources, and more • Students might earn digital badges or other forms of portable credentials to reflect their demonstrated competency of Graduate Profile outcomes • Teachers will have nurtured classroom environments that create a sense of trust and belonging, value individual differences, promote open communication, and support quality work • Teachers will be skilled facilitators of real-world learning experiences that actively engage students and offer them voice, choice, and agency as they pursue purposeful, deep learning • Community members will contribute to the learning experiences of students, actively reinforcing the shared goals of advancing the Graduate Profile outcomes
P L A N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To actualize our Graduate Profile, over the next two years lead teachers and instructional coaches will help build teacher capacity to use student-centered project-based learning that fosters the skills articulated on our Graduate Profile • To support this growth period, leaders will not only allow, but encourage teachers and students to experiment with teaching and learning strategies that are student-centered and project-based • Next month, we'll introduce to leaders, teachers, and students some inquiry protocols that encourage curiosity, an open exchange of ideas, and data use to drive direction and decisions • In August, leaders, teachers, and students will begin using a reflection protocol to promote cycles of inquiry, feedback and continuous improvement, specifically targeted to promote X outcome of the Profile
P A R T	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will be supported to adapt classroom environments and instructional methods to allow students to regularly practice the Graduate Profile outcomes in a safe, trusting environment • By listening to students and teachers, site and district administrators work to shift conditions in order to promote mutual trust, collaboration, experimentation, inquiry, reflection, use of data, and more • Parents and family members will be supported to promote opportunities for students to practice and demonstrate Graduate Profile outcomes at home and in the community • Community partners will be asked to adapt their support role to align with our efforts to help students advance toward the Graduate Profile outcomes

APPENDIX C:
EQUITY-MINDED PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS
(from XQSuperSchool.org)

Five steps to start lucid dreaming

School and district leaders must lucid dream: stay present and respond to short term needs while making space to design for an equitable and resilient future. Leaders are inherently forced to focus on the short term needs impacting stakeholders right now. Lucid dreaming necessitates taking time not just to put out fires but also to plan for the future.

Here are five ways leaders can get started:

1. Meet schools where they are.

Dramatic, systemic change can be intimidating. To get schools moving in the right direction, shrink the change and make the work more accessible. Ask leaders to share “hunches” on what a more equitable and resilient future can be.

2. Start with the community.

All design work should begin with stakeholders at the table. While leaders may differ in their bandwidth amidst the crisis, user-centered design that includes student, family, and staff voices should be the minimum. Lean on the work of others, including [equityXdesign](#), the [National Equity Project](#), [IDEO](#), and [Stanford d.School's K12 Lab](#), to support districts in engaging in an equitable process.

3. Build on strengths.

Self-assessing and building on strengths will attract teachers and leaders to the work and start to build a coalition of supporters. Instead of focusing on problems, follow the old adage, “you’ll catch more flies with honey” and start by celebrating. For example, highlight what Sujata Bhatt, senior fellow at Transcend Education, calls the [micro-innovations](#) that teachers and leaders are doing every day to help them see themselves as the drivers of change.

4. Design for the edges.

Traditional planning focuses on what works for the most students. Designing for equity focuses on what works for the most marginalized students in our schools. Making school work for the students at the edges is not only equitable but it also benefits all students. Leaders can begin by simply focusing on a few individual students, seeking to learn about their experience (through [empathy interviews](#) or [shadowing](#)), and testing a small solution.

5. Identify resource gaps.

When trying to make shifts quickly based on your resources it is imperative to understand what your team’s strengths are and where it will be helpful to get additional support or outside perspectives. [Utilizing an organizing framework](#) can help you think about where you are aligned and plan for where you need to go.