Portrait of a Graduate Playbook Executive Summary

What it takes to meet the aspirations of Portrait of a Graduate goals

At Digital Promise, we have been working with school districts and systems across the country that are engaging in rigorous and robust practices to transform their schools into places where their Portrait of a Graduate skills and dispositions are an integral part of how teachers design and implement learning experiences and how all students experience Powerful Learning daily. From our thought partnership with these school districts, their authentic reflections on problems of practice, and our landscape scans on integrated learning pathways and future-ready skills assessment strategies, we have identified four components of successful Portraits of a Graduate programs.



To support your district to make your Portrait of a Graduate come alive, we describe each component, highlight a district story, and provide an interactive thinking sheet and protocol.

Visioning and Planning for Portrait of a Graduate

Many districts begin their Portrait journey by engaging their students, staff, families, and communities in determining the skills and dispositions most valued for their town, city, or county. This important first step usually results in a comprehensive list of future-ready skills and competencies that reflect the vision for not just what a graduate should know, but what transferable and durable skills they should have to thrive in life and careers. This is an important step that takes time and commitment. Working with educators, students, and community members helps to build a shared understanding of the competencies chosen for the Portrait and is an opportunity to forge relationships among staff, students, and the community. Yet, Portrait work cannot stop here.

The next phase of vision and planning for Portrait of a Graduate takes two essential steps: (1) getting clear on what the competencies look and sound like in classrooms and (2) aligning the vision of the Portrait of a Graduate with a district's mission, strategy, and learning framework. Without gaining clarity about the competencies on a granular level and how the Portrait's competencies align with district initiatives, the Portrait will just be that—a portrait hanging on the wall.

Read about how North Salem Central School District (New York) aligned their Portrait of a Graduate to their instructional framework and built in systems to ensure their Portrait was a guiding force for their strategic vision.

An important component of any Portrait program is auditing existing practices, connecting new competencies to ongoing initiatives, and establishing an actionable framework that supports future communication, professional learning, and assessment. Digital Promise developed this Visioning and Planning for your Portrait of a Graduate Thinking Sheet to support districts working through this important step. In it, you will find prompts to guide you through setting a course for making your Portrait of a Graduate an integrated part of teaching and learning in your district. Digital Promise also designed a protocol to support visioning and planning for your Portrait of a Graduate: Vision Quest creates a shared understanding about how the Portrait of a Graduate work connects to initiatives across a district, building ownership and commitment across teams and departments.



Communicating and Calibrating on Future-Ready Skills

Having clear definitions, articulations, and theories of action for your competencies is an essential step in actualizing a Portrait of a Graduate instructional program. However, these definitions and articulations are often still subject to multiple interpretations. A crucial component of any Portrait program is ensuring that all educators have a common understanding of what critical thinking or other competencies look like in classrooms and in learning.

Read about how Norwalk Public Schools (Connecticut) built out tools and protocols to create a specific, shared understanding of what each of their Portrait competencies looks like in classrooms.

To support your district in developing similar resources and processes to ensure teachers, school leaders, and district leaders agree on what the competencies mean and which student artifacts do and do not demonstrate your Portrait competencies, use Digital Promise's Communicating and Calibrating on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet. This interactive guide walks you through planning for opportunities to build a shared understanding of your Portrait competencies. We have also adapted a protocol that can be used with teachers or administrators to analyze student work through the lens of Portrait competencies. This Artifact Box Protocol creates opportunities to analyze student work as evidence of Portrait competencies, prompting needed dialogue and discussion about what Portrait competencies look like in practice.

Building Educator Capacity for Designing Future-Ready Skills Learning Experiences

Developing robust professional learning structures is an essential step in enabling teachers to design daily learning experiences centered on Portrait of a Graduate competencies. When implementing any Portrait program, it is important to evaluate current capacity-building infrastructure, leveraging instructional coaching, and cultivating teacher-leaders to ensure all educators are equipped to foster future-ready skills.

Read about how Ephrata Area School District (Pennsylvania) leveraged a cohort of teacher-leaders to shift professional learning in their district and supported teachers in designing student-centered classrooms that foster future-ready skills.

Being strategic about designing learning opportunities for teachers that result in instructional practices that provide students with opportunities to develop and practice Portrait competencies requires two steps. First, conduct a landscape scan of current professional learning opportunities. Then, draw from professional learning research for effective best practices. Use Digital Promise's Building Educator Capacity for Designing Future-Ready Skills Learning Experiences Thinking Sheet to support your district in designing robust professional learning for staff that centers your Portrait of a Graduate. Or, try out the Force Multiplier lesson design routine with administrators and students to translate your Portrait competency definitions into explicit and specific learning opportunities to support student development of future-ready skills.

Documenting and Providing Feedback on Future-Ready Skills

Successful Portrait of a Graduate programs develop systems for documenting and providing feedback about student growth on the competencies included in the Portrait. Students need opportunities to self-reflect and receive feedback from peers and experts to support their competency growth. The community also wants to understand how well schools are meeting their commitment to the Portrait of a Graduate competencies and are looking for windows into the school experience. An integrated, meaningful, and systematic approach to support students to self-reflect, notice growth, and receive feedback on their future-ready skill competencies can both deepen students' future-ready skill growth and provide your district with data, artifacts, and stories that can be communicated to your community.

For examples of what this looks like in practice, read about how districts across the country are developing assessment systems for their Portrait of a Graduate programs in Portraits in Progress: Emerging Future-Ready Skills Assessment Strategies. Learn what teachers and students think about Norwalk Public Schools' use of student portfolios to notice and recognize student future-ready skills growth.



To support your district's Portrait assessment efforts, use Digital Promise's Documenting and Providing Feedback on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet. This guide will help you get clear on your goal for assessing Portrait competencies, summarize common approaches, and provide suggestions for implementing the assessment approach you choose.

Ready to try out a simple strategy for supporting students to notice their own growth, receive feedback, and self-reflect? Check out Digital Promise's Pause, Collect, Reflect Protocol for use with your Portrait of a Graduate program.

As schools are being asked to address the prevalence of emerging technologies, a deepening mental health crisis in young people, and a pressing need to prepare students for an uncertain future, implementing Portrait of a Graduate programs rooted in Powerful Learning provides a path for creating educational systems where students can thrive. Digital Promise has seen classrooms that foster future-ready skills such as critical and creative thinking, communication, and collaboration while giving students a sense of purpose, agency, connection, and curiosity. Creating a vision of how a district's Portrait of a Graduate aligns with district priorities, communicating and calibrating on future-ready skills, building educators' capacity for designing future-ready skills learning experiences, and creating a system to document and provide feedback on students' future-ready skills are what will ensure that your graduates can live up to the aspirations in your Portrait of a Graduate.



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Visioning and Planning for Portrait of a Graduate Thinking Sheet

Districts actualize a Portrait of a Graduate by starting with a clear, shared vision grounded in their priorities. An important component of any Portrait program is routinely auditing existing practices, connecting new competencies to ongoing initiatives, and establishing an actionable framework that supports future communication, professional learning, and assessment.

Portrait of a Graduate Vision

Why did your district develop a Portrait of a Graduate?

Portrait of a Graduate [Competencies, Skills, Dispositions]

What are the core competencies, skills, or dispositions your district has identified as the focus of your Portrait of a Graduate? How does your district define each?

Current Landscape Analysis

Where and how do each of the competencies above show up right now? What other initiatives or school district priorities (e.g., District Mission and Vision, District Strategic Plan, School Improvement Plans, Instructional Priorities) is the Portrait of a Graduate aligned with? How might these priorities and programs work together to improve educational outcomes for all students? Where might there be dissonance that needs to be considered and addressed?

Use the Vision Quest Protocol to guide your team through this conversation.

Name of Program/Initiative:	Name of Program/Initiative:	Name of Program/Initiative:
Evidence of alignment:	Evidence of alignment:	Evidence of alignment:
Concerns for alignment:	Concerns for alignment:	Concerns for alignment:
Opportunities for alignment:	Opportunities for alignment:	Opportunities for alignment:

Revisit the Vision

After reviewing your Portrait of a Graduate, the ways in which it currently manifests in your district practices, and the possibilities for future alignment, use this space to revisit your why. Does your vision need to be updated? Specifically consider how the implementation of a Portrait of a Graduate will improve educational outcomes in your district.

Next Steps

Explore these resources for the next phases of your Portrait of a Graduate work:

Communicating and Calibrating on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet

Building Educator Capacity for Designing Future-Ready Skills Learning Experiences Thinking Sheet

Documenting and Providing Feedback on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet

As you make your Portrait of a Graduate actionable, consider:

- **Instructional Practices:** Which learning experiences provide students the opportunity to develop Portrait of a Graduate competences? Learn more here.
- **Evaluation, Feedback, and Iterative Improvement:** How will you evaluate your Portrait of a Graduate program? Learn more here.
- **Systems of Support:** Want to know more about how Digital Promise can support actualizing your Portrait of a Graduate? Learn more here.

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Vision Quest for Portrait of a Graduate Competencies

An important component of any Portrait of a Graduate initiative is auditing existing practices, connecting new competencies to ongoing initiatives, and establishing an actionable framework that supports future communication, professional learning, and assessment related to the successful implementation of a Portrait of a Graduate. Use this Vision Quest activity to conduct a landscape analysis of where and how each Portrait of a Graduate competency currently shows up across your district's guiding documents and initiatives. Identify where those efforts align, where they pull in different directions, and where your Portrait work could strengthen them.

Materials needed:

District definition, progressions, or "I Can…" statements for all Portrait competencies

Poster paper and markers or a digital method for small groups to list and share common observations

One relevant district guiding document (or a 1-page excerpt) per poster:

- District mission & vision statement
- District strategic plan
- School improvement plan(s)
- Instructional framework (or instructional vision, priorities, curriculum scope and sequence, evaluation rubric, professional development plan)
- One or two other active district initiatives that intersect with Portrait of a Graduate outcomes

Suggested Participants:
School district leaders, curriculum teams, school leaders, grade-level teams, professional learning communities.

Suggested Timing: 60-75 minutes

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Set up one poster per guiding document, with each poster pre-labeled with three columns: *Alignment, Dissonance, Opportunity*.

Post the Portrait of a Graduate competency definition/progression with each poster so all groups are working from the same reference.

Pre-determine groups of 3-5 participants. Identify how groups will rotate through all stations.

Step One: Small Group Reflection (10 minutes)

- Each group starts with a poster and district guiding document.
- Review the guiding document together and discuss the three guiding questions below.
- Have one recorder capture the group's initial thinking in the matching poster column.

Alignment	Dissonance	Opportunity
How well do our Portrait competencies reflect this policy or practice? What evidence do we see?	Where is there misalignment, contradiction, or a gap between this document and our Portrait competencies?	How could this initiative advance our Portrait of a Graduate goals—or how could our Portrait work strengthen this initiative?

Step Two: Rotate (5 minutes per rotation)

- Move to the next poster. Read what the previous group(s) recorded before adding anything.
- Add new observations to any column; build on or respectfully challenge what's already there rather than repeating it.
- Repeat until every group has discussed each poster.

Step Three: Return and Review (5 minutes)

- Return to your group's first poster.
- Read everything that was added across all rotations and discuss what stands out: patterns, surprises, or recurring concerns.

Step Four: Whole Group Synthesis (10-15 minutes)

- Bring all groups together.
- *Walk the full gallery once as a whole group if time allows.*
- Discuss:
  - Where did we see clear alignment and continuity across our district efforts?
  - Where is there dissonance, and what does it tell us?
  - Where could we provide additional clarity, and how?
  - **Risks/Blind Spots:** Where are the knowledge gaps that need further investigation before we act?
  - **Accountability & Ownership:** Who owns each area of opportunity or risk identified?

Step Five: Revisit the Vision (15-20 minutes)

- Individually or as a group, revisit your "why" for the Portrait of a Graduate based on what emerged from the gallery walk.
- Complete the following:
  - "*Given what we saw today, our Portrait of a Graduate vision/approach needs to _____ in order to improve outcomes for all students.*"
- Before the group disbands, identify one specific next step and who owns it.

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Communicating and Calibrating on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet

Having clear definitions, articulations, and theories of action for your competencies is an essential step in actualizing a Portrait of a Graduate instructional program. However, these definitions and articulations are often still subject to multiple interpretations. An important component of any Portrait program is ensuring that all educators have a common understanding of what these competencies—like critical thinking—look like in classrooms and in learning.

Opportunities for School and District Leaders to Develop a Shared Understanding of Competencies

What systems, protocols, and routines will you create to ensure that school and district leaders have a shared understanding of what competencies look like in instructional practice? How will you support school and district leaders to communicate their shared understanding to teachers? How often will you engage in these practices? How will you follow up with school and district leaders to see how their shared understanding is developing?

Strategies for Calibrating on Competencies

Calibrating helps ensure that everyone applies the competencies consistently. Consider implementing one of the strategies below, or adapt them to create protocols that fit your district.

Artifact Box	Learning Walks	Lesson Plan Analysis Using a Tuning Protocol	Leader Conducts Student Focus Groups

Notes:

Opportunities for Teachers to Develop a Shared Understanding of Competencies

What systems, protocols, and routines will you create to ensure that teachers have a shared understanding of what competencies look like in instructional practice? How will you find time and opportunities for teachers to build this shared understanding? How can teachers work both within and across grade levels and content areas to build a wider, shared vision?

Methods for Teachers to Calibrate on Competencies		
Protocols for teachers	Peer Observation or Ghost Walk	Reflecting on Student Artifacts
Structures for protocols	Teachers participate in protocols based on grade level or content area. Professional learning communities would be a good opportunity for protocols that support competency calibration. This work supports calibration that speaks specifically to one grade level or content area.	Teachers participate in protocols with representatives from different grade levels or content areas. Staff meetings would be a good opportunity for protocols that support competency calibration. This work supports school-wide calibration on competencies.
Notes:		

Next Steps

Explore these resources for the next phases of your Portrait of a Graduate work:

Visioning and Planning for Portrait of a Graduate Thinking Sheet

Building Educator Capacity for Designing Future-Ready Skills Learning Experiences Thinking Sheet

Documenting and Providing Feedback on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet

As you make your Portrait of a Graduate actionable, consider:

- **Instructional Practices:** Which learning experiences provide students the opportunity to develop Portrait of a Graduate competences? Learn more here.
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- **Systems of Support:** Want to know more about how Digital Promise can support actualizing your Portrait of a Graduate? Learn more here.

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Artifact Box Protocol for Portrait of a Graduate Competencies

Portrait of a Graduate competencies are often subject to multiple interpretations. Even with clear definitions, practices, progressions, and "*I Can…*" statements, individuals often have different mental models of what Portrait competencies look like in practice. By examining artifacts together using this Artifact Box Protocol, educators can identify differences in mental models. The scaffolded discussion also helps educators reach consensus about what constitutes evidence that students are demonstrating the Portrait competencies.

Materials needed:

- Per participant: One artifact of students engaged with a pre-identified Portrait competency…
- District definition, progressions, or "I Can…" statements for the pre-identified Portrait competency
- Poster paper and markers or a digital method for small groups to list and share common observations

Suggested Participants:
School district leaders, curriculum teams, school leaders, grade-level teams, professional learning communities

Suggested Timing: 60-75 minutes

Pre-Activity Preparation:
Instruct each participant to bring an artifact that demonstrates students engaged with a pre-identified Portrait competency. For instance, you might ask all participants to bring in a copy of student work or a classroom activity in which students are using critical thinking.

Step One: Artifact Share and Analysis (10 minutes per participant)

Organize participants into small groups (4-5 participants). Instruct a participant to share their artifact by showing only the artifact and stating the topic and grade level for the lesson. The other participants first ask any clarifying questions they have about the artifact. Participants then take turns sharing what they see in the artifact that indicates students are engaged with the Portrait competency. After all participants have engaged, the person that shared the artifact explains their thinking for selecting the artifact.

Step Two: Reflection (3-5 minutes)

After all artifacts have been shared, participants should spend 3-5 minutes silently reflecting on the artifact sharing activity. Suggested prompts for this reflection time are:

- *What did we agree counts as evidence that students were engaging with this competency?*
- *Where did we disagree?*
- *What evidence did only some of us see as showing students engaging with the competency?*
- *Why might we have different views about what counts as evidence of students engaging with the competency?*
- *How can our district documents (definitions, progressions, etc.) help us decide what is and what isn't evidence?*

Step Three: Discuss and List (5-7 minutes)

Ask participants to share and discuss their reflections. During that discussion, encourage participants to create a list of evidence that everyone agrees on that demonstrates students engaged with the Portrait competency. This list will be shared with the larger group.

Step Four: Whole Group Discussion and Consensus (10 minutes)

Bring everyone back together and have each group share their final list while a facilitator captures common examples of evidence across all groups. Participants then review how the district materials support or conflict with the compiled list of evidence. As a final step, the group agrees on any suggested revisions and identifies three artifacts that support understanding of how this competency is demonstrated.

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Building Educator Capacity for Designing Future-Ready Skills Learning Experiences Thinking Sheet

Developing robust professional learning structures is an essential step in enabling teachers to design daily learning experiences centered on Portrait of a Graduate competencies. An important component of any Portrait program is routinely evaluating current capacity-building infrastructure, leveraging instructional coaching, and cultivating teacher leaders to ensure all educators are equipped to foster future-ready skills.

Building Educator Capacity Vision

Why does your district need to invest in building educator capacity for this work? What happens if teachers are left to design Portrait of a Graduate-aligned learning experiences without support?

Core Levers for Building Capacity

What are the mechanisms your district could use to build this capacity? Name and define each (e.g., instructional coaching cycles, instructional leadership, teacher leader cohorts, "coalition of the willing" teams). Apply these seven research-based features of effective teacher professional development to design and implement your capacity-building strategies.

Current Landscape Analysis

Where and how do teachers currently engage in professional learning around these competencies?

Professional development

- Teacher leader cohort (district-wide)
- Building-based cohort (schools of focus)
- Choice-based professional development sessions
- Teacher-led professional development
- Content area or grade-level mandated sessions
- District-wide mandated sessions
- Other

Tools and resources

- Thinking routines resource hub (one-pagers, slides, videos)
- Curriculum with spotlight on competencies (callouts to competencies, videos)
- AI-assisted instructional planning tools
- Teacher-created file sharing hub
- Model classrooms
- Project-based learning unit library
- Student self-assessment tools
- Competency rubrics
- Other

Alignment with Other Initiatives

What other capacity-building efforts (e.g., instructional coaching programs, professional learning communities, existing professional development calendars) is this work aligned with—or competing with?

Revisit and Refine Your Approach

After mapping your current landscape and alignment opportunities, consider what might be missing? Does your capacity-building plan need to add new structures, a stronger coalition, or different tools?

Next Steps

Explore these resources for the next phases of your Portrait of a Graduate work:

Visioning and Planning for Portrait of a Graduate Thinking Sheet

Communicating and Calibrating on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet

Documenting and Providing Feedback on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet

As you make your Portrait of a Graduate actionable, consider:

- **Instructional Practices:** Which learning experiences provide students the opportunity to develop Portrait of a Graduate competences? Learn more here.
- **Evaluation, Feedback, and Iterative Improvement:** How will you evaluate your Portrait of a Graduate program? Learn more here.
- **Systems of Support:** Want to know more about how Digital Promise can support actualizing your Portrait of a Graduate? Learn more here.

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Force Multiplier Lesson Refinement Protocol

Portrait of a Graduate competencies are only as strong as a teacher's ability to translate them into a specific lesson. This Force Multiplier Lesson Refinement Protocol builds on the natural interdependence of the competencies with a structured peer-feedback process, giving educators a scaffolded way to examine a real lesson together, name where each competency is explicit versus assumed, and identify the smallest change that would strengthen more than one competency at once. The result is a concrete, committed next step for a specific classroom.

Materials needed:
One lesson plan or instructional task per presenting teacher (see Pre-Activity Preparation) District definition, progressions, "I Can…" statements, and/or rubric for each Portrait of a Graduate competency Timer, visible to the group

Suggested Participants:
Classroom teachers, instructional coaches

Suggested Timing: 30 minutes for one educator to share (could be done on a rotating basis during professional learning community meetings or all together during a longer professional learning session).

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Instruct each educator to select a lesson plan or instructional task they want to refine in order to better address multiple Portrait of a Graduate competencies. Let them know they will share it with other educators.

Pre-determine groups of 4-6 educators. Provide guidance on selecting a facilitator/timekeeper for each round.

Step One: Educator Frames the Lesson (5 minutes)

- Ask participants to have ready their upcoming lesson or instructional task they want to refine in order to better address multiple Portrait of a Graduate competencies.
- The presenting teacher then shares their lesson (the objective, task, student context, etc.) without interruption.

Step Two: Group Asks Clarifying Questions (3 minutes)

- Group members ask the presenter brief, factual questions (e.g., "How long do students have for this?") to clarify their understanding of the lesson or instructional task.

Step Three: Examine and Map Portrait Competencies (7 minutes)

- Collaboratively or independently, review the lesson or instructional task against district Portrait of a Graduate resources and consider: *In what ways are the Portrait competencies being addressed? Where are there missing opportunities? How might strengthening one instructional move support the development of one or more competencies?*
    - For each competency, identify if it is:
        - → Present: built into the task design
        - → Assumed: the task expects it but doesn't actually require it
        - → Absent: no real opportunity to demonstrate the skill exists in the task

Step Four: Force Multiplier (5 minutes)

Group members name at least one place where a single, small change would unlock more than one competency at once.

Step Five: Reflect and Commit (5 minutes)

- The presenter reflects on what they heard and communicates their next step(s).
    - Suggested frame: "*The smallest change I could make to this task that would unlock the most competencies at once is _____, because_____.*"

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Documenting and Providing Feedback on Portrait of a Graduate Competencies Thinking Sheet

Successful Portrait of a Graduate programs develop systems for documenting and providing feedback on student growth on the competencies included in the Portrait of a Graduate. Students need opportunities to self-reflect and receive feedback from peers and experts to support their competency growth.

Goals for Documenting Student Growth on Portrait Competencies

What are you hoping to learn by documenting student growth on Portrait competencies? What is important to you as you engage in this process?

Methods for Documenting and Providing Feedback

The methods below offer several ways to document and provide feedback on student competency growth. Consider implementing practices most aligned with your district's strategic vision and capacity. Descriptions and case studies of these approaches can be found in Portraits in Progress: Emerging Future-Ready Skills Assessments.

Student Portfolios Digital or analog portfolios provide opportunities for students to show growth over time and to self-reflect on Portrait competencies.	**Performance Tasks** Performance tasks can be formative or summative while providing data about how students can use Portrait competencies to engage with content area learning.	**Defenses of Learning:** Often paired with student portfolios, defenses of learning also provide students with opportunities to show their growth over time to community partners and to self-reflect on Portrait competencies.	**Curriculum-Embedded:** Content area learning experiences that require Portrait competencies, such as project-based or collaborative learning, can serve as Portrait assessment opportunities if documented and communicated consistently.

Notes:

Sample of Strategies for Implementing Methods of Documenting and Providing Feedback

Teacher Leaders:	**Model School(s):**	**Grade Level(s):**	**Summer Learning:**
Create a professional learning community of teachers interested in piloting assessments,. providing opportunities to meet and reflect on assessments. If successful, organize classroom visits for others to learn from teacher leaders.	Select one or two schools within your district to pilot the assessment approach. Work with school leaders and teachers to enact the assessment approach. If successful, organize school visits for other schools to learn from the model school.	Select one or two grade levels to pilot the assessment approach. Transition years can be especially helpful grade levels to understand what is required for successful assessment approaches.	Student summer learning time can be an excellent place to pilot an assessment approach. With more cross-disciplinary opportunities and freedom with timing and curriculum, assessment approaches can be tried in a low-stakes environment.

Notes:

Necessary Policy Changes, Resource Needs, or Technology Support

Part of having a robust and sustainable system for document and providing feedback on student competency growth is ensuring there are enabling conditions for the identified method. Consider what actions you might need to take to implement the chosen approach to documenting students' competency growth.

Examples of system-level enabling conditions, strategies, and tools school districts can implement include:

- Access to and support for digital student portfolios
- District-wide days on the calendar for defense of learning presentations
- Inclusion of a defense of learning in graduation requirements
- Integration of the Portrait competencies in a set numbers of lessons each teacher delivers

Notes:

Next Steps

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Pause, Collect, Reflect Protocol

Use this guide to build intentional Pause, Collect, and Reflect routines to support the effective implementation of student portfolios.

Read through the reasoning for a Pause, Collect, Reflect Protocol and the tips for each step. Use the blank spaces to brainstorm how your school or district might implement each step of this protocol. This guide can be used in professional learning communities, faculty meetings, or at leadership retreats.

Why?	By embedding structured touchpoints into classroom culture, educators can empower students to curate meaningful portfolio artifacts that showcase growth, celebrate personal wins, encourage self-evaluation, and set actionable goals for the future. Student portfolios have been found to be a useful method to notice and recognize student growth on Portrait of a Graduate competencies.
How?	Pause at intentional moments in the school year to Collect artifacts of learning to add to students' portfolios. At every touchpoint, provide students scaffolded opportunities to Reflect on those artifacts and their learning journey.

Pause

TIP 1: Determine what merits a pause

What are the most meaningful engagement points that occur during the year or unit of study? How might pausing to collect and reflect on student artifacts support learners' continued growth? Based on your analysis, **identify 2-3 points over the course of the year or unit of study** where you will pause to intentionally collect and reflect on student artifacts.

TIP 2: Set intentions and routine systems early

Consider how you will **clearly communicate the purpose of the portfolio** collection and reflection processes to students and families. Ensure that this pause is a meaningful use of your time and students' time by integrating it directly into your existing classroom structures so it feels like a natural part of the learning cycle rather than an afterthought.

TIP 3: Plan for reflection

Plan for meaningful reflection opportunities during the pause. By providing students a variety of feedback from both teachers and peers that speaks directly to their academic work as well as the Portrait of a Graduate competencies, you will help students understand and reflect on both their successes and areas of growth.

Put it into action

Collect

TIP 1: Collect artifacts that tell a student's learning story

Collect specific and sequential artifacts across a single learning objective (e.g., pre-assessment, formative checkpoint, or summative assignment) to efficiently capture student growth over time and work in progress.

TIP 2: Collect artifacts that celebrate the wins

Invite students to identify artifacts that highlight what they are doing well. Consider using this activity as an opportunity to share and celebrate student successes and solicit feedback from their peers.

TIP 3: Collect artifacts that document lessons learned

Encourage students to **collect artifacts that show mistakes made and fixed, or items containing actionable teacher feedback**. This process gives students a practical archive to use as a scaffold for future work.

Put it into action

Reflect

TIP 1: Lean into self-evaluation protocols

Scaffold opportunities for students to analyze their learning process and internalize feedback. Invite students to independently evaluate their learning artifacts against rubrics, or use self-evaluation forms and checklists to track and evaluate their progress.

TIP 2: Vary when reflection happens

Provide students the opportunity to engage in "in-the-moment" reflections (e.g., exit tickets) to capture immediate insights, as well as retrospective or "future-focused" reflections (e.g., data-driven goal setting) to look at their learning progression over time.

TIP 3: Focus on feedback

Use protocols like student-led conferences as an opportunity for shared feedback and reflection between the teacher and student or between students. Through these conversations, students can explore how they demonstrated specific Portrait of a Graduate competencies, what they learned from a specific assignment, and how to make it better next time.

Put it into action

Interested in implementing a Portrait of a Graduate program?
Partner with Digital Promise and shift your culture of teaching and learning.

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