PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

Competency Descriptions

ADAPTABILITY

Our students…

- Work effectively in a climate of ambiguity and changing priorities.
- Demonstrate agility in thoughts and actions.
- Respond productively to feedback, praise, setbacks, and criticism.
- Understand, negotiate, and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions.
- Demonstrate flexibility when acclimating to various roles and situations.

CIVIC LITERACY

- Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes.
- Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels.
- Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

COLLABORATION

- Honor and leverage strengths to build collective commitment and action.
- Enrich the learning of both self and others.
- Seek, contribute, and respond to feedback to achieve collective outcomes.
- Elicit diverse perspectives and contributions.

COMMUNICATION

- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes, and intentions.
- Use communication for a range of purposes and audiences (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade).

CONFIDENCE

- Believe in one's ability to ultimately attain a defined goal.
- Persist to overcome adversity and obstacles to uncover alternate strategies to achieve goals.
- Reflect on successes and failures as a means to refine the path moving forward.
- Take initiative and act with purpose.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Engage in appropriate communication to resolve disagreements peacefully and productively.

CONSCIENTIOUS

- Recognize how personal decisions and actions have an impact beyond oneself.
- Demonstrate a diligent work ethic and attentiveness to detail.
- Work responsibly by being organized, thorough, and efficient.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

- Develop and draw from a baseline understanding of knowledge in an academic discipline.
- Transfer knowledge in combination with new learning to deepen understanding and influence conclusions and solutions.
- Use content knowledge in routine, as well as innovative, ways in real-world situations.

CONTRIBUTORS

- Act with integrity and empathy while demonstrating personal accountability and make positive contributions to the world.
- Actively pursue opportunities that make a positive difference in the lives of others.

COURAGEOUS

- Demonstrate vulnerability and learn from mistakes.
- Engage when the outcome or benefit is unknown or unclear.
- Demonstrate mental fortitude to pursue meaningful goals, despite daunting challenges.

CREATIVITY

- Demonstrate originality, imagination, and new ways of thinking about things.
- Transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, and relationships to create new or meaningful ideas, methods, or interpretations.

CRITICAL THINKING

- Understand the "bigger picture" and propose solutions that are mindful to the impact they may have on other parts of a system.
- Consistently improve the quality of one's own thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing.
- Applies disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence.

CURIOSITY

- Eagerly explore the world around them.
- Inquisitively seek answers and understanding.
- Are energized by new learning and insights, including those different from currently held ideas, beliefs, and values.
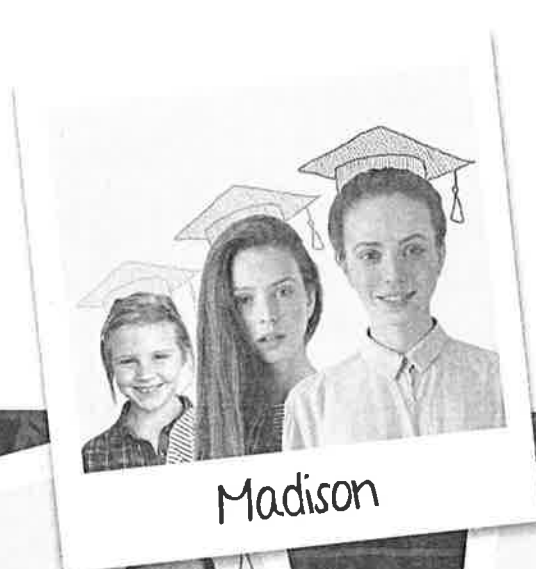
Madison

Maya

Luis

Wei

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

A FIRST STEP IN TRANSFORMING YOUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

Getting Started Guide
for Superintendents

PortraitofaGraduate.org

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE
Getting Started Guide for Superintendents

Transforming our School System

Every school system is unique, but they are connected by a shared aspiration: that all students have an educational experience that prepares them to become lifelong learners and contributors.

Now more than ever, that experience must not only provide for the acquisition of rigorous academic content, but it must also be more intentional about fostering critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and other 21st century skills and habits of mind that our students need to navigate and thrive in this complex, rapidly changing world.

Many school systems across the country have engaged their larger community in developing a Portrait of a Graduate, a collective vision that articulates the community's aspirations for their students.

Locally developed, but globally positioned, the Portrait of a Graduate serves as a North Star for system transformation. Providing strategic direction for the redesign of the overall educational experience for students, this collective vision reinvigorates and re-engages students, teachers, and community stakeholders.

As school leaders, it is important to ask ourselves:

- What are the hopes, aspirations, and dreams that our community has for our young people?

- What are the skills and habits of mind that our children need for success in this rapidly changing and complex world?

- What are the implications for the learning experiences we provide in our school systems?

The Portrait of a Graduate is the first step in framing a new vision for your school system. Once you create your Portrait, the exciting work of implementing this new vision begins.

Key Steps in Each Phase

1 PLAN	☐ Build understanding and ownership among your district's leadership and school board ☐ Create a Portrait of a Graduate Design Team that will be involved across all phases to build a sense of urgency and create excitement across the community ☐ Define your overall timeline
2 ACTIVATE	☐ Convene the Portrait Design Team ☐ Study the implications for your students in light of the changing economy, workplace, and society
3 CREATE	☐ Draft a prioritized set of competencies, including 21st century skills, mindsets, and literacies ☐ Draft visuals that convey a compelling story ☐ Reach consensus about a selected visual to share with the broader community ☐ Continue to discuss this work in the broader community and elicit their ideas for the Portrait ☐ Collect feedback from the community about the societal conditions and share with the Portrait Design Team as they draft the Portrait ☐ Decide what revisions are necessary
4 ADOPT	☐ Submit recommendation to the school board for adoption ☐ Publish and leverage the adopted Portrait as the North Star for subsequent strategic planning, and the design of educational experiences for students

As you explore the phases, you'll find the following features throughout this guide:

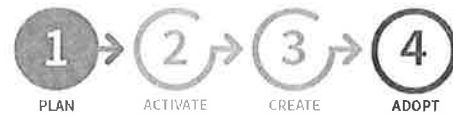**CHECKLIST**: Activities or protocols to help you facilitate the Portrait of a Graduate design process

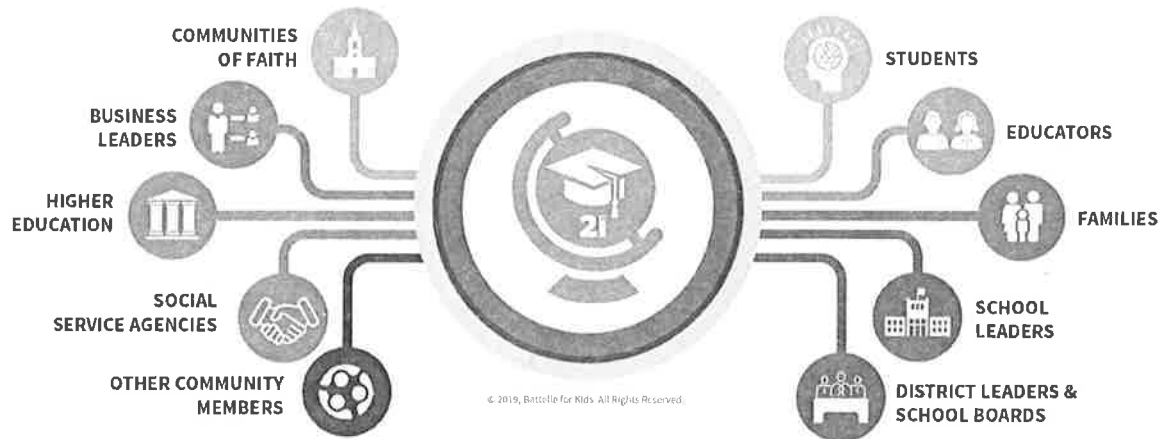**TIP**: Advice from the field or success stories

RESOURCE: Links to articles, videos, templates, and more

Let's get started!

Sample Representation of Your Portrait Design Team

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH
BUSINESS LEADERS
HIGHER EDUCATION
SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES
OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

STUDENTS
EDUCATORS
FAMILIES
SCHOOL LEADERS
DISTRICT LEADERS & SCHOOL BOARDS

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Note your ideas for Portrait Design Team candidates:

Phase 2: Activate the Design Team

Phase 2 is a critical readiness phase for your Portrait Design Team members, who are key contributors to help design your district's Portrait. This phase begins by setting the cadence of meetings to conduct this work.

Orient your team by walking them through the:
- overall design process phases,
- meeting structures, and
- background materials that will be used to shape the work.

Before the Portrait Design Team meets, provide them with initial resources to review. They can also explore our Gallery in advance, which features various Portraits that other districts have designed and shared.

Phase 2 involves reviewing research and other relevant materials that reveal what students need for success in the 21st century— and contrasting that with their current learning experiences.

CHECKLIST

☐ Convene the Portrait Design Team
☐ Study the implications for your students in light of the changing economy, workplace, and society

TIP: Get Creative to Share Learnings

After identifying 30 books related to 21st century competencies, Salisbury Township School District invited authors to participate in podcast interviews. One such interviewee was Keith Sawyer, a creativity researcher and author of Zig Zag: The Surprising Path to Greater Creativity and Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration.

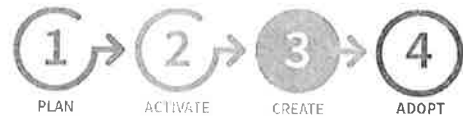# Phase 3: Create the Portrait and Its Story

Phase 3 is where your district's Portrait of a Graduate begins to take shape. With focused conversation about the knowledge, skills, mindsets, and literacies essential for 21st century student success, the Portrait Design Team will craft the meaning behind the Portrait.

Over the course of 3 (or more) meetings, the Portrait Design Team will discuss, create, and refine a visual representation of the competencies within your district's Portrait of a Graduate. Through a design process that intentionally engages your community, the Portrait becomes the community's stated vision for its students.

Sample Portrait Design Team Meeting Outcomes and Activities
Following are recommended time lengths and activities for Portrait Design Team meetings:

Meeting 1: Framing the Why (3 hours)	
PREREADING	• Key readings and videos on the changes in society and the competitive global economy • Books, articles, websites, and videos about 21st century competencies
ACTIVITIES	1. Begin discussion around the question: *Are our students well prepared to contribute and compete in this global, innovative economy?* 2. Analyze how intentional and purposeful your district is in developing students' competencies, including 21st century skills, mindsets, and literacies. 3. Facilitate group discussions around key observations and learnings from the assigned readings and videos. 4. Brainstorm all ideas about competencies to include in your Portrait of a Graduate. 5. Begin to organize Portrait of a Graduate competencies into general categories.
HOMEWORK	☐ Reflect on the team's initial draft of a Portrait of a Graduate. ☐ Do research on the various competencies. ☐ Return to the next meeting with your ideation of a proposed Portrait of a Graduate.
DISTRICT TEAM WORK	☐ Record all notes from the meeting discussion.

✔ CHECKLIST

With the process planned and the right community and business members engaged, conversations are underway, and the work has begun in earnest to:

- ☐ Draft a prioritized set of competencies, including 21st century skills, mindsets, and literacies
- ☐ Draft visuals that convey a compelling story
- ☐ Reach consensus about a selected visual to share with the broader community
- ☐ Continue to discuss this work in the broader community and elicit their ideas for the Portrait
- ☐ Collect feedback from the community about the societal conditions and share with the Portrait Design Team as they draft the Portrait
- ☐ Decide what revisions are necessary

⋯ TIP: Know Any Artists?

Many districts intentionally invite an art student or art teacher to participate in the Portrait of a Graduate Design Team to:

1. Involve the creative mindset in the process
2. Engage in helping to create the visual concept(s) for the Portrait that also align with the district's brand
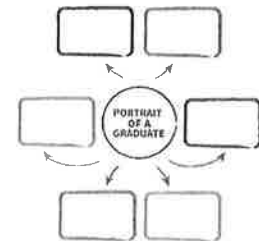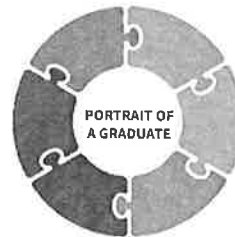
🗒 RESOURCES

- ☐ Visit the Resource Hub on PortraitofaGraduate.org to access the example Portraits, tools, research, stories, videos, and more!
- ☐ Ready to create a visual representation of your Portrait? Use our My Sketch tool to begin.
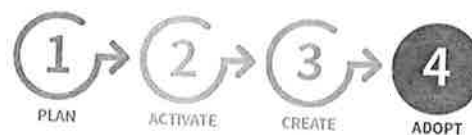
CHECKLIST

Phase 4 involves formally embedding the Portrait as the North Star for school system transformation.

- ☐ Submit recommendation to the school board for adoption
- ☐ Publish and leverage the adopted Portrait as the North Star for subsequent strategic planning, and the design of educational experiences for students

TIP: Recognize Your Portrait Design Team

Consider ways that you can recognize the Portrait Design Team's work while also highlighting the final Portrait of a Graduate.

TIP: Publish Portrait Online and Share Your Story

Share your Portrait of a Graduate on your website, including videos and stories about the process. Plan to communicate your progress in making the vision a reality to all stakeholders.

Virginia Beach City Public Schools posted its Profile of a Graduate on a website dedicated to its strategic framework, Compass to 2020. In addition to the Profile, the site includes the district's strategic framework and a timeline of strategic actions taken to support their work to ensure all students are future ready. A visual ties together the division's mission, core values, and strategic goals as a way of demonstrating the interconnectedness of the work and communicating it out to internal and external stakeholders.