PORTRAITS OF A GRADUATE

STRENGTHENING CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS THROUGH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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Founded in 1994, **CASEL** is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that first introduced the term social and emotional learning (SEL). CASEL's mission is to help make evidence-based SEL an integral part of education from preschool through high school. Today, it collaborates with leading experts and supports districts, schools, and states nationwide to drive research, guide practice, and inform policy. To learn more, visit **casel.org**.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, which provides states with the opportunity to develop a more holistic look at student success in their accountability systems (without losing sight of academic achievement), state leaders have been developing policies on how best to prepare students to meet the demands of the future. Part of these efforts has entailed ensuring that students graduate from high school equipped with the knowledge and skills to succeed in college and career.

To this end, research has shown that social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education, serving as a booster rocket for many of the indicators and outcomes measured in schools. Through evidence-based SEL, students increase their academic achievement; develop more positive beliefs about themselves; and improve their behaviors, skills, and competencies (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). Further, students learn critical skills, attitudes, and knowledge pivotal for success in school, in their future lives and careers, and in community and civic engagement (DePaoli et al., 2018; Jones & Kahn, 2017). Moreover, a series of surveys have indicated that students, parents, teachers, and administrators see the value of SEL in classrooms and communities and support further implementation across learning environments (Atwell et al., 2021; Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019; DePaoli et al., 2018; Flanagan et al., 2021; Lieberman, 2021).

Emergent research has started to make the case that SEL is a key strategy for preparing students beyond high school, into college and career. Amidst the rapidly evolving future of work, the skills and competencies needed to be prepared for work and life—or to be "future-ready"—have become far less predictable. Despite this, social and emotional skills, also called "durable skills" throughout this report, remain evergreen, essential for youth to thrive in adulthood, both in their personal lives and the labor market.

Over the past five years, CASEL has worked to illustrate the essential role SEL skills play in future readiness. A recent scan of employer surveys and job listings confirmed that the most in-demand skills, such as teamwork and adaptability, are high-level social and emotional skills (Yoder et al., 2020). Informed by the experiences of participants in the Collaborating States Initiative, CASEL created a developmental framework for integrating SEL with Career and Workforce Development (CWD) that aims to assist all states integrating SEL with CWD efforts systemically so state education agencies (SEAs) can support districts and schools in preparing students for postsecondary success (Dermody et al., 2022). Later that year, Civic, CASEL, and the Coalition for Career Development collaborated on a roadmap for integrating SEL and CWD, as well as three case studies showing how states are already advancing an integrated framework towards future readiness (Atwell et al., 2022). All this occurs as employers' increasing recognition of the importance of "soft skills" for company success transforms workplaces globally (LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 2019).

Several states have begun the process of developing a "portrait" or "profile of a graduate," which is a holistic look at the skills and competencies students need to master to thrive in work, postsecondary educational opportunities, community, and their personal lives. To better understand how states are utilizing the portrait of a graduate to prepare students for career and college, we conducted a scan of all 50 states to see which states had developed statewide portraits of a graduate or visions of a high school graduate. The results inform the findings and recommendations of this report, including the skills states are highlighting as essential for students' future success and how states are making this vision actionable in service of cultivating future-ready graduates.

WHAT IS A PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE?

A statewide portrait of a graduate lays out a shared vision between the state, districts, communities, and families that articulates aspirations for all students. The portrait of a graduate describes the skills, mindsets, and competencies needed to be prepared for life after high school, whether that be in their careers, postsecondary education, personal lives, or communities.

The portraits provide a well-rounded view of student success, which includes academic skills, social and emotional (or durable) skills and civic characteristics that students should master as they graduate high school. They help guide school districts in defining the skills that students should have by high school graduation. Ultimately, a state's portrait of a graduate is the vision that establishes the skills and aptitudes that they believe, based on a stakeholder input, graduates need to be successful as adults.

The portrait of a graduate is a powerful tool for building cohesion and buy-in across the state and helps to align the work of the SEA as well as key terms, definitions, and goals. When done well, portraits of a graduate can help align the state across sector and industry, creating buy-in from a diverse set of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, students, principals, superintendents, and community and business leaders. These stakeholders should have a seat at the table in defining the academic, social, and emotional competencies students should be able to demonstrate by the time of their graduation that are tied to in-demand fields and aligned with the skills most in-demand by postsecondary institutions and employers within the state.

Creating this shared vision often serves as a catalyst for broader changes to center students' social and emotional growth within the education system. Portraits of a graduate align with and complement efforts to make education more relevant to students and make pathways to future success more personalized, instilling in students the social and emotional skills needed for their chosen path. For example, portraits of a graduate can be used to support competency- and performance-based education that captures the full breadth of student skills, including social and emotional competencies. In addition, portraits of a graduate can be used effectively to measure students' career and college readiness and can be a meaningful indicator of such readiness in state accountability systems.

This report examines state portraits of a graduate and how state strategies for development and implementation can support future readiness. It also provides recommendations for state education agencies to consider to lift up the importance and visibility of these portraits.

HOW STATES ARE USING THE PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE TO ADVANCE FUTURE READINESS

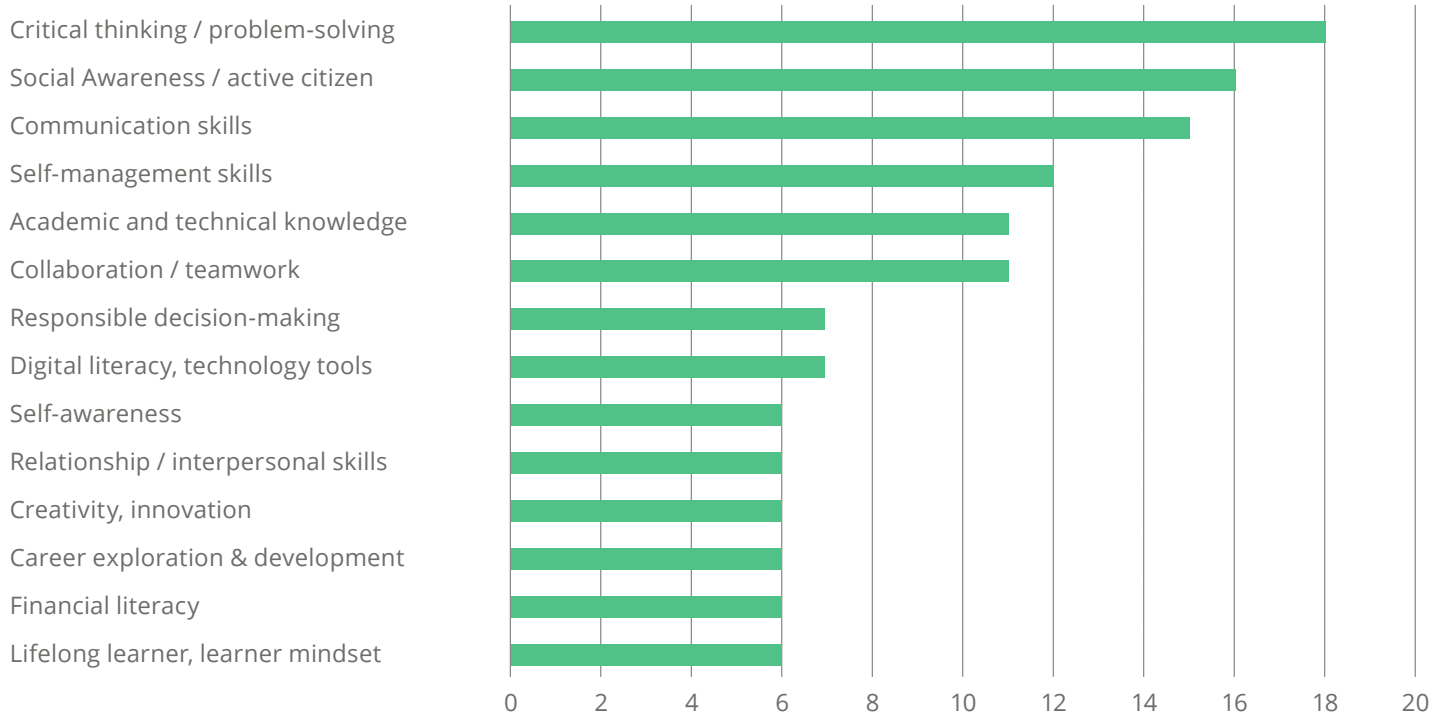
FINDINGS FROM THE STATE SCAN

To better understand how states are using the portrait of a graduate to prepare students for the future, we conducted a thorough review of states to determine which are using the portrait of a graduate and how they are doing so. We uncovered both the breadth of skills defined by states, as well as diverse and innovative ways states are making their graduate portraits actionable

Our review found that 30 states espouse some vision of the skills, mindsets, competencies, and characteristics students should have upon receiving their high school diploma. Not all these visions, however, were graduate portraits. For example, Alaska lays out "that the purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them" (Alaska Statutes, State Education Policy), but does not define competencies that students should have at graduation as a typical portrait of a graduate would. In all, our scan found 20 states with graduate portraits. Portraits of a graduate continue to emerge at the state level. For example, New York is currently in the process of developing their own portrait (Stanford, 2023).

States lay out a variety of academic, technical, and social and emotional skills throughout their portraits of a graduate. While academic mastery was one of the most frequently cited skills, durable skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, social awareness, being an effective communicator, and self-management were among the competencies identified in most state portraits. These skills are the same ones identified in a 2020 scan of employers as being most in-demand (Yoder et al., 2020). Figure 1 depicts the frequency with which skills or competencies were mentioned in portraits of a graduate, detailing the 14 most common.

Figure 1. Most Commonly Cited Skills & Compentencies



Taken together, these skills lay out what states expect of high school graduates. Students leaving high school will be critical thinkers with the skills, awareness, and dispositions needed to be active citizens and the creativity to solve problems. They will be able to communicate well and collaborate effectively, with the empathy and respect for diversity needed to lead teams and build relations in work and their personal lives. They will have the self-management skills needed to set and accomplish goals, make responsible decisions, and persevere when faced with roadblocks on their path to thriving adulthood. Graduates will have the academic and technical knowledge needed to excel in their professional lives and the mindset of lifelong learners, prepared for whatever the future brings and adaptable to exploring new careers as the labor market changes. They will be adept at utilizing emerging technology and navigating the ambiguities of the digital world.

This is a high bar for 18-year-olds to meet. As this review indicates, states are keenly aware that today's students will be called on to meet the growing challenges of the 21st century, as among the top skills are critical thinking and problem-solving, social awareness skills, and being an active citizen. Moreover, states deeply understand it is necessary to develop students' social and emotional skills and competencies. The following sections will delve deeper into how states are implementing their portrait of a graduate to help students meet these expectations.

HOW STATES ARE MAKING THEIR PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE ACTIONABLE

This section will explore the strategies states are utilizing to ensure students are leaving high schools with the social and emotional skills and competencies laid out in their portraits of a graduate.

Broadly Engaging Stakeholders to Create Buy-In

Ensuring that a state's portrait of a graduate work is actionable begins before finalizing the competencies or skills; it starts with the development process. Two states—Nevada and North Carolina—both of which recently completed developing their portrait of a graduate, paint a picture of how this can be done.

NEVADA

Finalized in 2023, the Portrait of a Nevada Learner describes a successful student as possessing a variety of durable skills that when applied will enable students to "build a life, a home, and a future for themselves, their families, and their communities" (Nevada Department of Education, n.d.). The skills are aligned under four groups—empowering, connecting, impacting, and thriving—and include SEL skills such as self-awareness, the ability to communicate, showing empathy and respect, and resilience.

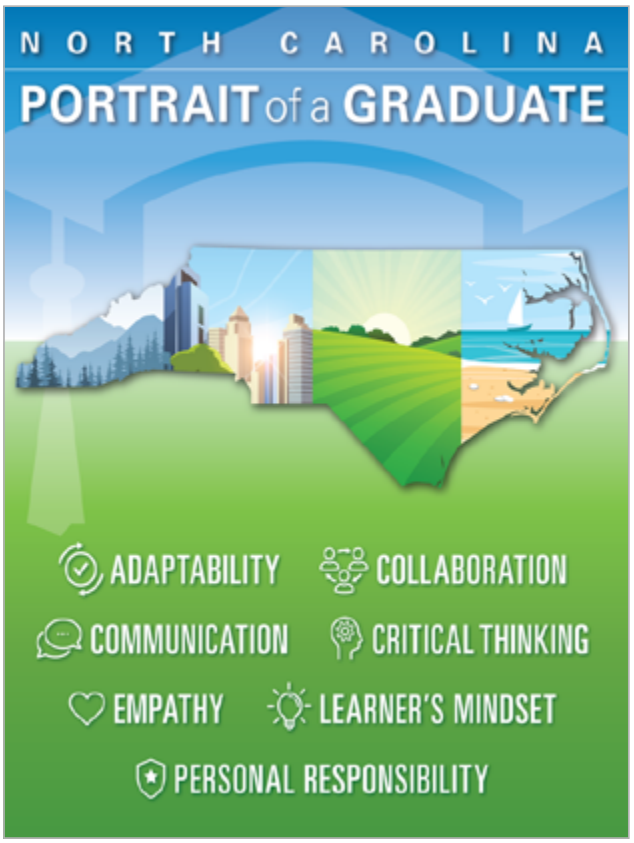
While the Portrait of a Nevada Learner is new, the development process unfolded over nearly two years and included a robust engagement and feedback process. In October 2022, over 200 Nevadans gathered to first lay out mindsets and skills for the portrait (Nevada Future of Learning, n.d.). From there, virtual conversations were held in November and December, and a survey was circulated to gather additional information on the skills for the portrait.

At the beginning of 2023, over 1,400 inputs were coded to develop a first draft of the portrait (Nevada Future of Learning, n.d.). From there, educators across the state began a process to pilot implementation of the Portrait of a Nevada Learner to understand how it impacted the school environment. Case studies of the pilot participants were created and now will serve to inform further implementation. During this time, a second survey fielded feedback on the portrait draft.

Finally, in April and May of 2023, young people, educators, education leaders from PreK to higher education, family advocates, and business and community leaders came together to participate in a series of panels to bring all the feedback together into a final draft of the portrait, which was released in May.

The work of piloting and implementing the Portrait of a Nevada Learner continues. The next step for Nevada is integrating the learnings into policy and practice.

NORTH CAROLINA



North Carolina's portrait of a graduate identifies seven durable skills for student success: adaptability, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, empathy, learner's mindset, and personal responsibility. These skills were chosen because they show "that student academic success matters, but so does a student's ability to adapt, to collaborate, to communicate, to think critically, to show empathy, to learn, and to take personal responsibility" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.), illustrating the holistic view of future readiness many states are highlighting in their portraits of a graduate.

North Carolina's process engaged nearly 1,300 North Carolinians representing K-12 educators, administrators, families, employers, communities, and higher education institutions. The state hired a vendor to facilitate community stakeholder discussions throughout the state. Volunteers were organized into design teams, which collaborated over three months to determine the competencies included in the portrait. Teams consisted of students, teachers, parents, and administrators joined with cross-sector partners including:

- North Carolina Community College System;
- North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities;
- The University of North Carolina system;
- Best NC, a nonprofit coalition of business leaders;
- myFutureNC, a nonprofit cross-sector organization focused on educational attainment;
- North Carolina Department of Commerce; and
- North Carolina Chamber of Commerce.

As described in the press release announcing the finalized portrait of a graduate, North Carolina indicated that "the Portrait will also drive better alignment between employers, communities, higher education institutions, and families as North Carolina schools help to prepare students for the postsecondary plans of their choice" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2022).

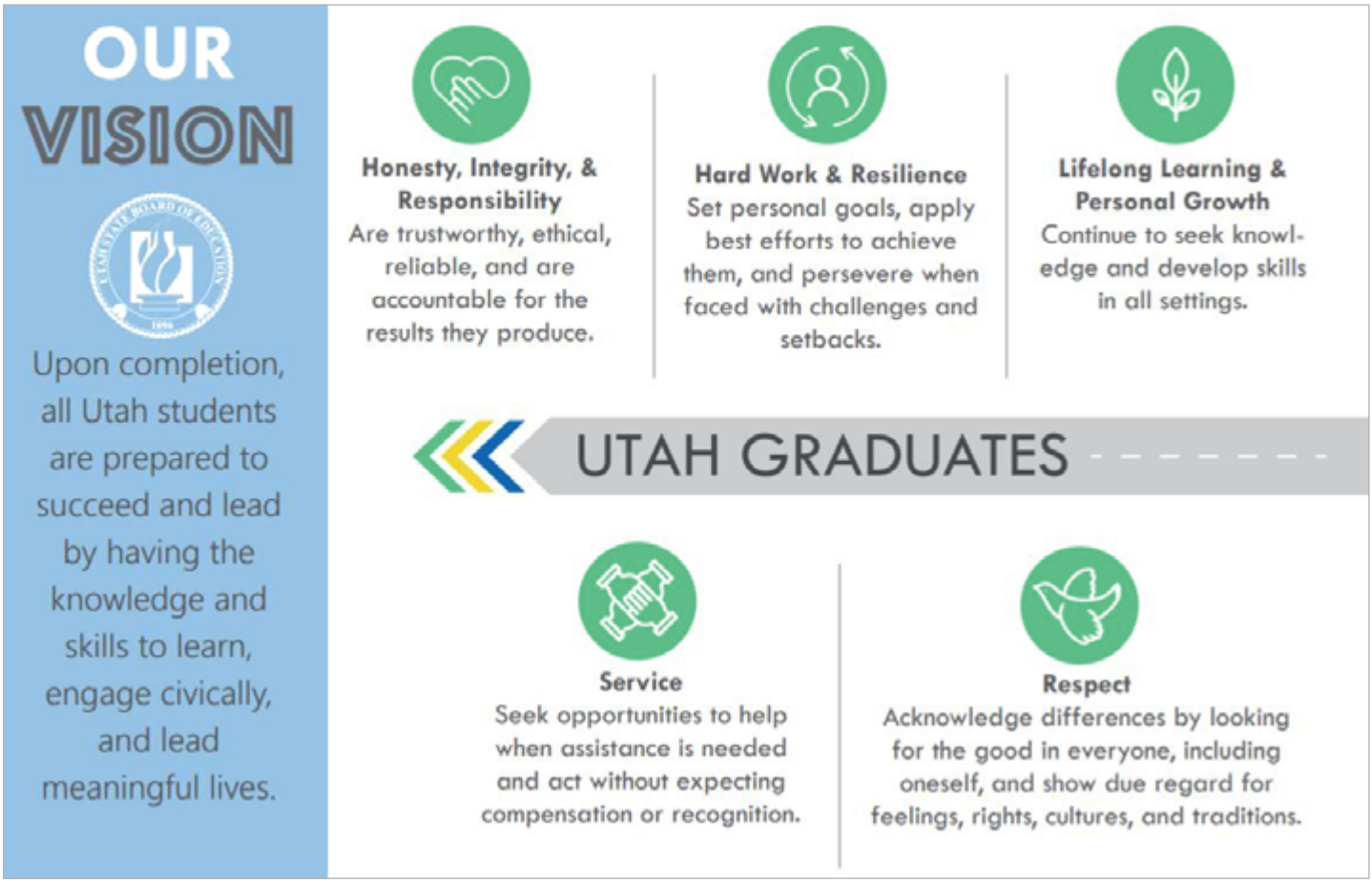
While the state is still in the early stages of implementing its portrait of a graduate, the SEA has released multiple resources to support the implementation of the portrait in North Carolina's schools. This includes a Portrait of a Graduate Playbook, which is intended to support educators to understand the durable skills and mindsets laid out in the North Carolina portrait of a graduate. It contains example activities to develop these skills across grade bands, as well as additional tools like rubrics, "I Can" Statements, and Suggestion for Youth. These are all intended to guide understanding and measure student progress from Pre-K to graduation. The rubrics define the criteria associated with each of the durable skills as well as important skills and dispositions associated with each, illustrate a continuum of performance, and provide a common vocabulary for stakeholders. The resources were designed with the collaboration of over 120 participants.

This portrait of a graduate is also part of a broader transformation of the North Carolina Department of Education under Operation Polaris, part of the superintendent's strategic vision. North Carolina next plans to design reliable and effective assessments of students' durable skills identified in its portrait of a graduate.

UTAH

Using Competencies to Advance Future Readiness

Another way states are using the portrait of a graduate to prepare students for their lives after high school is building learning progressions to the competencies or mindsets identified in the state's portrait of a graduate. One example of a state utilizing these processes is Utah.



Utah's portrait of a graduate identifies a list of characteristics for all students to be successful graduating from Utah public schools. Specifically, the Utah Talent MAP (Mastery, Autonomy, and Purpose) outlines 13 elements as the characteristics of a well-rounded Utah graduate. In addition to technical skills like academic mastery and digital literacy, these elements include SEL skills like wellness; civic, financial, and economic literacy; communication; critical thinking and problem-solving; creativity and innovation; collaboration and teamwork; honesty, integrity, and responsibility; hard work and resilience; lifelong learning and personal growth; service; and respect.

As part of this work, in 2018, the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) created a task force to discuss graduation requirements, which led to the creation of the state's portrait of a graduate. They embarked on this process with an express goal of maximizing stakeholder engagement, including from chambers of commerce and college freshman who recently completed their high school education in Utah (Norville, 2022).

After the state board of education approved the Utah Talent MAP in 2019, the state began working to develop its portrait of a graduate into grade-banded competencies. In 2020, the state released learning goals based on the elements described in the portrait of a graduate with competencies for each grade band across the P-20 progression to help teachers understand whether they are putting students on a path to future success (Norville, 2022). Finally, the state agency developed model rubrics for teachers that they could adopt in the classroom to ensure students were meeting expectations as they progressed in fall of 2021.

The portrait of a graduate process was part of a larger modernization of the state's education system. While Utah had already implemented competency-based education policies, in 2021 USBE formalized the option for school districts to move from traditional instructional time requirements to permit learner-validated enrollment for attendance calculations and funding purposes. This shift provided school districts with the flexibility to integrate personalized, competency-based learning opportunities for students (Erwin and Silva-Padron, 2022), including those that support college and career readiness, such as work-based and experiential learning.

In 2023, the state released an update to Utah's Personalized, Competency-Based Learning (PCBL) Framework, described as "the bridge between Utah's Portrait of a Graduate to the work of Utah's educators, students, and families to achieve the learning outcomes as described in Utah's Core Standards and the P-20 Competencies ('Utah Portrait of a Graduate: Competency Model Rubrics')." The PCBL Framework has five essential components, including SEL, and it provides clear indicators to cultivate student learning aligned with Utah's portrait of a graduate, as well as evidence-based practices to help students attain them.

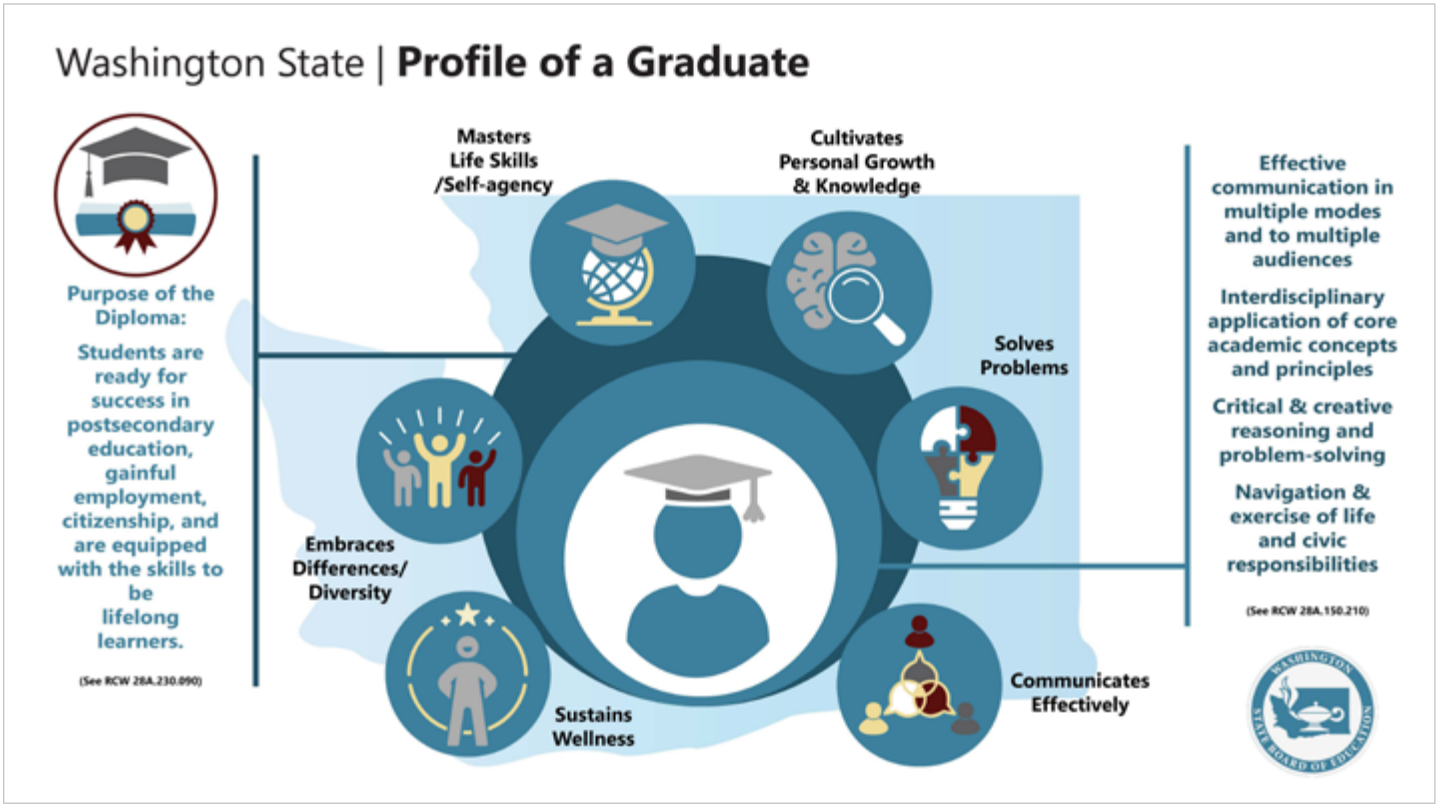
The state has also engaged in a review of its accountability system to consider how the Utah vision of student success and readiness, as laid out in the Talent MAP, is reflected in the current system and what modifications may be considered by state policymakers (Norville, 2022).

All these actions have helped organize the priorities and practices of Utah's education system in service of achieving the knowledge, skills, and competencies described in the state's portrait of a graduate. In doing so, the state portrait of a graduate has supported school districts in developing their own portrait of a graduate to prepare students for the future.

WASHINGTON

Aligning High School Graduation Requirements to the Portrait of a Graduate

Other states have begun to rethink their high school graduation requirements. In Washington, this has included aligning those requirements to the skills outlined in their portrait of a graduate.



Washington's portrait of a graduate explicitly lays out the purpose of a diploma, which is to signify "students are ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, citizenship, and are equipped with the skills to be lifelong learners" (Washington State Department of Education, n.d.). The portrait lays out the skills and dispositions a Washington state graduate should have upon receiving their diploma including personal knowledge, problem-solving, communication, physical and emotional well-being, and embracing diversity (ibid.).

Getting to the final portrait was a multi-year process that began with state legislation in 2019, which led to the creation of a Mastery-Based Learning Working Group (MBLWG). The MBLWG contained a diverse cast of stakeholders, including elected officials, state education administrators, local school board members, and local educators.

Legislation also charged the State Board of Education (SBE) with reviewing a portrait of a graduate developed by the working group and to align the state's graduation requirements to the portrait (Norville, 2022). The MBLWG got to work developing a portrait of a graduate that described the diverse skillset students would need to be successful after graduation. Parents and students were consulted through the process to make sure the portrait reflected their priorities. The MBLWG also solicited feedback from institutions of higher education and business leaders.

Multiple listening sessions were held on the portrait of a graduate; some were facilitated by SBE, while others were facilitated by trusted community leaders. For instance, six community conversations were led by Root of our Youth, an organization of youth leaders committed to racial equity.

Another listening session was held by the Road Map Project Parent Leadership Team on the portrait of a graduate. SBE contracted with The Athena Group as an external consultant to help with specific engagement with students and families of color as well as students with disabilities. The state also conducted a survey that garnered approximately 300 responses.

The resulting portrait of a graduate reflects this wide range of input, laying out six broad competencies, skills, and mindsets, including applied social and emotional skills like problem-solving and sustaining wellness. In a report by the state's MBLWG, it explicitly makes the case that SEL is an integral part to helping "students develop the soft skills that employers seek," arguing that "social-emotional learning can and should be integrated across the system" to help build the skills laid out in Washington's Profile of a Graduate (Muller, 2021).

The state hopes the Profile of a Graduate "will be the bridge between the two routes to a diploma (credit-based and mastery-based)" (Muller, 2021). To do this, SBE was directed by the legislature to submit recommendations on how to align graduation requirements with the Profile of a Graduate. The board was tasked with examining potential changes to subject area, credit, and non-credit requirements and how the components of the state's diploma can better work together to signal a student's readiness for the future, while allowing more flexibility for expanded learning opportunities.

In 2022, the state conducted six listening sessions on alignment. The first series solicited areas for recommendations, while the second series of sessions reviewed draft recommendations. Approximately 600 people participated in these sessions. In January 2023, the report was submitted to the legislature. Based on research and public engagement, the SBE made 10 recommendations to the legislature on how to align the state's graduation requirements with the Profile of a Graduate. These include:

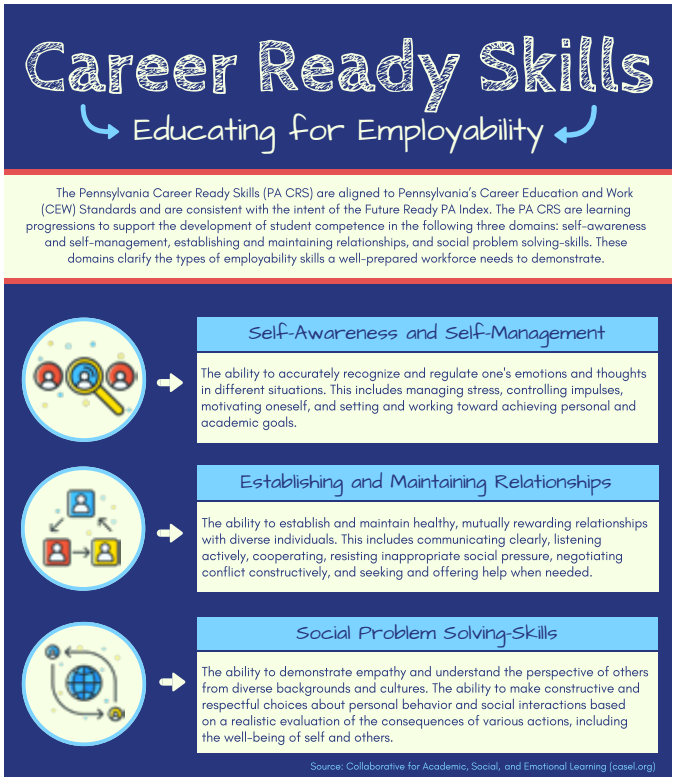
1. Creating more flexibility in physical education and health to allow for mental health content, including SEL learning standards (that should also be embedded across all subject areas);
2. Re-focusing requirements on learning standards rather than on seat time to support mastery-based learning and interdisciplinary learning;
3. Improving the high school transcript to better support reporting on mastery-based and multidisciplinary learning; and
4. Expanding graduation pathway options to include a performance-based and work-related pathway (Drake, 2023).

The work of aligning high school graduation requirements with Washington's profile of a graduate is ongoing. Still, this process illustrates how the profile of a graduate can transform how states work to prepare students for success in their futures, including by reviewing high school graduation requirements to ensure alignment with state visions for successful graduates.

PENNSYLVANIA

Explicitly Linking the Portrait of a Graduate to Career Readiness

The portrait of a graduate serves as a resource to help align the state's work to prepare students for the future. One way states can do this is by explicitly linking the portrait of a graduate to career readiness progressions in the state, as Pennsylvania has done.



In 2015, Pennsylvania formed a career-readiness committee as part of an ongoing effort to ensure all students leave high school ready for college and career. The committee engaged stakeholders from across the commonwealth representing leaders in business, education, and community groups and conducted a thorough review of the literature on future readiness. Two priorities emerged from this process: to embed career education and workforce development across all aspects of PreK-12 education; and to strengthen and expand employability skills development (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018).

Following this work, Pennsylvania developed the Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills (PA CRS). The Career Ready Skills are aligned under three SEL learning progressions that match CASEL's five skills: social-awareness and self-management, establishing and maintaining relationships, and social problem-solving. Each domain has a learning continuum across grade bands that "clarify the types of employability skills a well-prepared workforce needs to demonstrate" (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2018). These skills include respect, communication, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, critical thinking, integrity, and decision-making. This explicitly drives home the links between SEL and career and workforce development that help students leave high school future-ready and matches the skills employers have outlined as key in the workplace.

The PA CRS are aligned to Pennsylvania's academic standards in English language arts, social studies, family and consumer science, and health, safety, and physical education as well as the state's Career Education and Work Standards and Early Learning Standards. To illustrate this, Pennsylvania's Department of Education crosswalked the Career Readiness Skills to the Pennsylvania Academic Standards and Career, Education, and Work Standards. As the state says, "the PA CRS should be promoted, infused, and modeled in every aspect of a student's day (The PA Career Ready Skills: An Introduction)."

Pennsylvania has a site dedicated to implementation resources for school districts and educators. The resources are aligned along three phases: readiness, planning, and implementation.

By linking SEL with CWD through the PA CRS, Pennsylvania has built a portrait of a graduate that explicitly seeks to build social and emotional competencies through workforce development. This reflects the in-demand skills from employers (Yoder et al., 2020) and provides opportunities for developing future-ready students that are closely aligned with CASEL's developmental framework (Dermody et al., 2022).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Informed by the example set by the states described above, the below policy efforts can help states develop actionable portraits of a graduate that set a guiding vision for all elements of the education system. This vision will allow states to hold themselves accountable to ensure all schools and districts are educating students with the necessary social, emotional, academic, and future-ready skills to be successful in their postsecondary lives.

ENGAGE A BROAD, DIVERSE GROUP OF STAKEHOLDERS

To ensure the portrait of a graduate receives buy-in from students, families, educators, and other stakeholders in the state, it is important to engage a broad and diverse group of contributors.

The example set by North Carolina showcases how this can be done. Not only did North Carolina engage a broad group of stakeholders, but they created robust processes for them to engage and share their perspectives, including design groups that met and discussed their priorities. These design groups helped inform what would eventually become the competencies of the state's portrait of a graduate.

States should be sure to include as many partners as possible, including institutions of higher education, business leaders, employers, students, families, educators, and administrators. It is important for these stakeholders to not only have a seat at the table but feel they are co-creating the portrait of a graduate to ensure buy-in to the results and later implementation. Beyond engagement in developing portraits of a graduate, states can also create opportunities for all youth-serving institutions and business or labor market agencies and leaders to regularly convene to align priorities and future readiness efforts.

THINK CREATIVELY ABOUT CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS

The work of developing a portrait of a graduate requires a great deal of buy-in and administrative work. At a time when many educational offices have a great deal of competing priorities, understanding capacity constraints, and thinking creatively to overcome them, is an important aspect of successfully developing and implementing a portrait of a graduate.

Many of the states that developed portraits of a graduate utilized outside organizations or brought in third-party intermediaries to aid in implementing the portrait of the graduate. This includes Washington, which utilized nonprofit and other organizations to support or lead listening sessions and stakeholder engagement. In addition, Virginia brought in third-party intermediaries to work with districts in implementing its portrait of a graduate's competency-based education initiatives (Norville, 2022).

This is true at both the state and district level. For example, Utah understood that local planning and capacity-building would be a challenge without additional resources, so Utah's personalized, competency-based learning grant program provides funding at each stage of implementation to districts to invest in staff and leadership capacities, as well as connects them with technical assistance providers (Erwin and Silva-Padron, 2022). The grants are funded by the state board of education and are awarded competitively each year.

ALIGN THE PORTRAIT OF THE GRADUATE WITH ACADEMIC AND CAREER-READINESS STANDARDS

It is vitally important that the competencies, skills, and mindsets laid out in portraits of a graduate don't just become a poster on a wall. To ensure they impact and guide the vision, goals, and work of the education system, portraits of a graduate can be tied to academic and career-readiness standards.

To support the visions laid out in portraits of a graduate, states can also create integrated SEL and career and workforce development frameworks that include explicit learning benchmarks for social and emotional skills. Where separate standards for SEL and career already exist, states can begin this work by crosswalking SEL benchmarks and employability or career readiness benchmarks (several states in CASEL's SEL workforce community of practice have already done this, as Pennsylvania has done with their Career Ready Skills).

DEVELOP LEARNING PROGRESSIONS TO REACH PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE COMPETENCIES

As several of the above state examples show, working backwards from the competencies and skills within their portrait of a graduate can provide tools and resources for implementation and quality assurance. Progressions can help inform rubrics that help educators understand what skills students should be exhibiting and ensuring that they are on-track to success. Moreover, they can serve as a building block towards possible assessment in the future, as in the case of North Carolina, where the state first created learning progressions and is working to develop assessments as part of the next phase of their portrait of a graduate.

USE OF THE PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE TO MEASURE CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS OF STUDENTS

As the report "Undermeasuring: College and Career Readiness Indicators May Not Reflect College and Career Outcomes" (Zhou, 2023) explains, most states' reporting and accountability systems are inadequate to determine students' readiness for career and college opportunities. Since the portrait of a graduate is intended to be an indicator of readiness and of what the state deems are the minimum competencies and skills that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation, states should measure students' acquisition of these competencies and report on their acquisition as part of their state report cards. In addition, states should consider how to incorporate these measurements into their accountability systems in a meaningful way.

CONCLUSION

While portraits of a graduate have the ability to align education priorities in the state, it is imperative that states develop policies and practices to make their portraits actionable. As the report shows, strategies states are using include:

- Broadly engaging stakeholders to create buy-in for the portrait of a graduate;
- Linking competencies of the graduate portrait to state academic and college and career readiness standards or competency-based learning frameworks; and
- Aligning graduation requirements to the portrait of a graduate.

Ultimately, the portrait of a graduate helps with the implementation of many of the recommendations laid out in *Educating Future-Ready Students*. It can be a catalyst for integrating SEL and career and workforce development in high school to prepare students to live successful professional, personal, and civic lives.

The work highlighted in this report is ongoing and much of it deserves continued tracking to learn more about how states can use the portrait of a graduate to prepare students for college and career. This includes the plans of states like North Carolina, which demonstrate ways to assess the skills and mindsets identified in the state's portrait of a graduate, and Utah and Washington, which align the states' accountability systems with the competencies and mindsets of their graduate portraits.

Moreover, states must advance this work further to catalyze broad systems change. This includes using the portrait of a graduate to inform policies such as tracking student outcomes and integrating education and workforce systems within the states, as well as explicitly tying the portrait of a graduate to career and workforce development. States should also work with districts to develop their own portraits, or, if they already have done so, to align the district portrait with the state vision.

From the skills identified in our scan of portraits of a graduate, it is clear states understand the enormous challenges students will face and are prioritizing problem-solving, social awareness, and active citizenship to instill students with the social and emotional skills needed to be the leaders of tomorrow. The various skills, dispositions, and competencies within portraits of a graduate illustrate that states expect a great deal for students upon achieving their diplomas. States must uphold their side of the promise laid out in their portraits of a graduate by creating actionable policies and practices to integrate SEL into career and workforce preparation to set young people on a path to future success.

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