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PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

A FIRST STEP IN TRANSFORMING YOUR SCHOOL SYSTEM

Getting Started Guide for Superintendents

PortraitofaGraduate.org

School systems are strengthened when communities are engaged in shaping the future direction of their schools through the design of a Portrait of a Graduate.

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Battelle for Kids
A national not-for-profit organization committed to collaborating
with school systems and communities to realize the power and
promise of 21st century learning for every student.

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.

This guide is designed for superintendents and school system leaders who are interested in designing and adopting a Portrait of a Graduate. It contains tools and resources to help facilitate the design process.

A Shared Vision
While the process of developing a Portrait of a Graduate will look different in each school system, the most important move for any school leader is to engage their community in that process from day one.

Bringing together a broad array of stakeholders to co-create a Portrait of a Graduate can help build understanding and lasting support from the community that leads to enduring impact for students.

The Design Process
The Portrait of a Graduate design process involves a sustained community conversation leading to shared agreement about a unique community-owned picture of what graduates need for success. Every community and its school system is different, so every approach will be tailored to the local context.

1
PLAN
the engagement process

2
ACTIVATE
your Design Team of community members

3
CREATE
the visual and narrative story for your Portrait

4
ADOPT
your Portrait and plan for implementation

*For those seeking more support, Battelle for Kids can help facilitate the Portrait of a Graduate process. Contact us at **portrait@bfk.org**.*

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!

Phase 1: Plan the Engagement Process

Laying the Foundation for Success

Before committing to a Portrait of a Graduate process, district leaders need to intentionally create awareness of why change is necessary in shaping the future direction of our schools. These conversations should be around:

- how the world and society are changing,
- the changing workforce needs, and
- how we can redesign educational experiences to best prepare our students to meaningfully compete and contribute in the 21st century.

After building excitement and a sense of urgency for a Portrait of a Graduate, you'll begin outlining your process.

The most critical steps include engaging your district's leadership and school board, and developing a timeline for the design work. Then, it is time to carefully recruit and select the Portrait Design Team to shepherd the overall process.
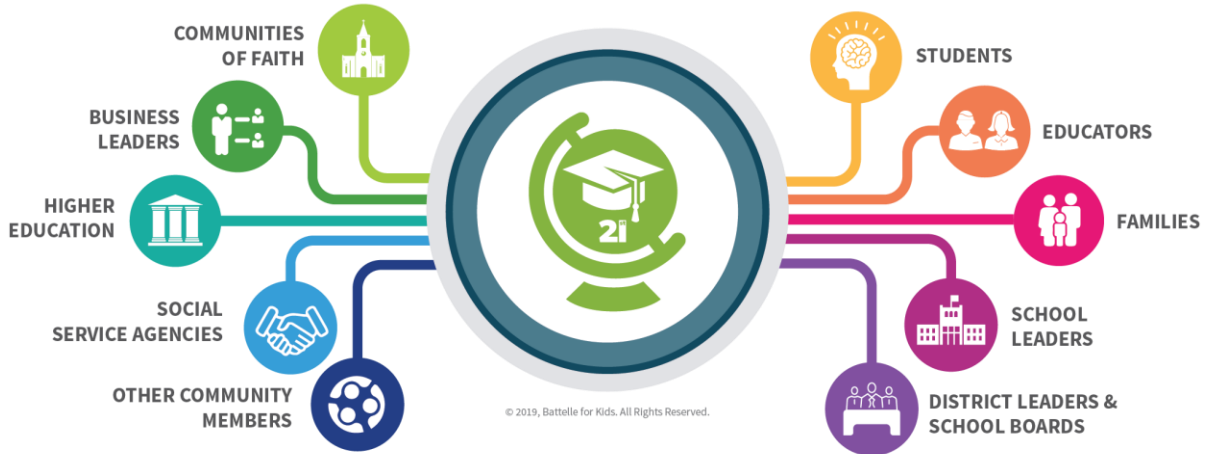
Who Should Be Engaged in your Portrait Design Team?

Building a dynamic team to help you carry out the work is an important step in the Portrait of a Graduate process. Forming a Portrait Design Team that is highly diverse and effectively represents all aspects of your community will improve the ultimate outcome. It also sets the stage for a strong base of support in the broader community.

Through an inclusive process, the Portrait of a Graduate becomes the community's collective vision for its students.

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:

CHECKLIST

- [ ] 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

TIP: Community Engagement

School system leaders have successfully launched their Portrait of a Graduate design work by scheduling community screenings of compelling films, such as *Most Likely to Succeed*, followed by discussions about the 21st century competencies that students need for future success.

Reflect on your thoughts for phase 1:

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.

RESOURCES

Read

As they engage in this work, Portrait Design Team members should review a series of books, articles, and videos to build their background knowledge and understanding about the new global economy and its impact on education and 21st century competencies.

Following are several resources to consider when identifying reading for your team:

- ☐ The Leader's Guide to 21st Century Education: 7 Steps for Schools and Districts (Ken Kay and Valerie Greenhill)
- ☐ Most Likely to Succeed: Preparing Our Kids for the Innovation Era (Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith)
- ☐ Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World (Tony Wagner)
- ☐ The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need—And What We Can Do About It (Tony Wagner)
- ☐ The Hewlett Foundation | Deeper Learning Competencies
- ☐ P21 | Framework for 21st Century Learning
- ☐ World Economic Forum | New Vision for Education: Unlocking the Potential of Technology
- ☐ Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning |Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World
- ☐ Education Policy Center | DEEPER LEARNING Improving Student Outcomes for College, Career, and Civic Life
- ☐ National Research Council | Education for Life and Work: Guide for Practitioners

Watch

- ☐ The Moxie Institute | The Adaptable Mind
- ☐ Do Schools Kill Creativity? (Sir Ken Robinson)

Note other resources that would benefit the Portrait Design Team's discussion:

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.

	Meeting 2: Aligning on Competencies (3 hours)
ACTIVITIES	1. Review work from the previous meeting and capture general reactions. 2. Unite around **4–6 competencies** to include in your Portrait of a Graduate. 3. Come to consensus on an initial draft visual representation of the competencies.
HOMEWORK	☐ Submit a list of potential community and business members who should provide feedback about the drafts to the superintendent. ☐ Create a list of **3 ways** the Portrait of a Graduate should be used by the school or district (e.g., *What are the potential implications of this work?*).
DISTRICT TEAM WORK	☐ Develop a draft of the work accomplished in Meeting 2 to share and reference during Meeting 3. ☐ Refine the Portrait of the Graduate competencies determined in Meeting 2 to share and reference during Meeting 3.

	Meeting 3: Selecting Your Portrait (3 hours)
ACTIVITIES	1. Select **2 of the Design Team's favorite visual representations** of the competencies. 2. Generate ideas about potential groups to provide feedback about the competencies. 3. Formulate a description of the strategic planning process and district transformation work.
DISTRICT TEAM WORK	☐ Refine the Portrait Design Team's feedback from Meeting 3 to create your final Portrait of a Graduate for your school board's consideration.

✔ 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
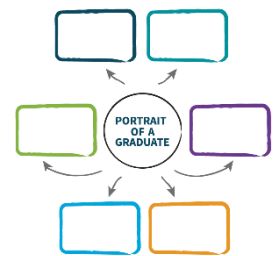
📋 RESOURCES

- ☐ 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.

Phase 4: Adopting the Portrait and Accelerating Your Impact

The culmination of this exciting community visioning process is your Portrait of a Graduate.

Your Portrait Design Team will feel a strong sense of pride and ownership for this work. Consider ways in which you could recognize the Design Team's contribution, while highlighting the final Portrait—and the many voices that helped shape the work.

In Phase 4, you're ready to recommend the board's formal adoption of your Portrait. Once you create your Portrait of a Graduate, the exciting work of implementing this new vision begins.

Turning Your Portrait of a Graduate into a Reality for Every Student
The serious implementation of your Portrait requires a thorough analysis of your district's systems to identify the changes that will be required to take this vision to scale. Consider these important aspects of your system:

- **Strategic Planning:** Use your Portrait as the key driver of strategic planning.
- **Systems Design:** Intentionally align all aspects of your organization to make the Portrait of a Graduate a reality for every student.
- **Human Capital Systems:** Recruit, grow, and retain talent who models 21st century learning and creates meaningful learning experiences for all students.
- **21st Century Learning and Assessment Design:** Design curriculum and lessons that create educational experiences that lead to deeper learning for all students.
- Executive Coaching and Leadership Development

For those seeking more support, Battelle for Kids can help.
*Contact us at **portrait@bfk.org**.*

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.

Share Your Portrait of a Graduate!

Share your district's Portrait of a Graduate in the online gallery.
Upload your final Portrait for sharing in our online gallery.

Thank you for leading the way in preparing every student to be a lifelong learner and contributor! Keep the momentum going to make 21st century learning a reality for all students:

1. Invite three peer superintendents to participate at: PortraitofaGraduate.org
2. Tweet your Portrait of a Graduate by using hashtag: **#PortraitofaGraduate**
3. Become a member of EdLeader21. Contact us to learn how

With more than 220 member districts and schools nationwide, EdLeader21 is the premiere network for educators implementing the competencies represented in their Portrait of a Graduate into their systems.

There is power in a professional learning network, uniting visionary leaders across the nation dedicated to 21st century education.