

N O R T H C A R O L I N A

PORTRAIT of a GRADUATE



Durable Skills Rubrics:

Suggestions for Use



North Carolina Department of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

PORTRAIT of a GRADUATE



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LETTER FROM THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Greetings,

I am so excited to share with you all the North Carolina Statewide Portrait of a Graduate Rubrics, “I Can Statements” and “Suggestions for Use!”

The students sitting in your classrooms today will be the leaders of tomorrow – whether in the workforce or in their communities. While a strong academic foundation is imperative, the durable skills you incorporate into your classroom by way of the Portrait of a Graduate will help to prepare students for any threshold they cross and any path they pursue upon graduation.

While I am sure many of your classrooms and existing lesson plans encourage and support the Portrait by encompassing attributes such as collaboration, communication and problem solving, it was important to us to provide North Carolina’s educators with a technical roadmap for intentionally integrating these durable skills in their teachings.

We are proud to present these resources, as they intend to serve as a guide for developing, understanding, monitoring and measuring student progress from Pre-K to high school graduation. The creation of these documents was informed by over 120 stakeholders, including our educators who provided their invaluable classroom perspectives. My wish is that these tools serve both you and your students as you prepare for the school year ahead, and I can’t wait to see how you build upon these ideas to better prepare North Carolina’s students for the bright future that awaits them.

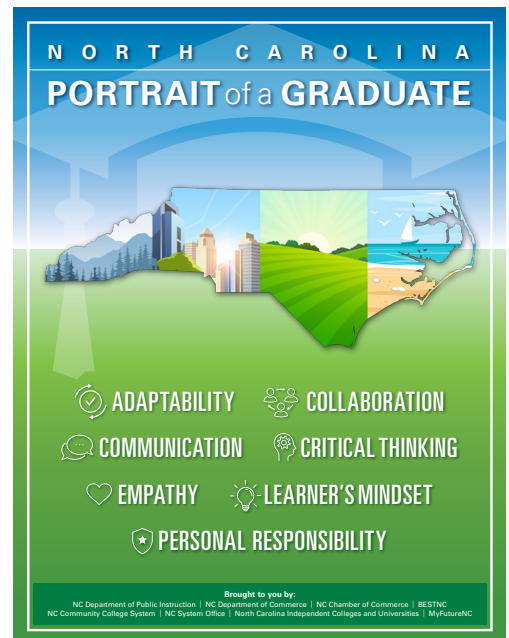
Thank you for your dedication to your students and education in North Carolina. The work you do is invaluable and changes the lives of so many in our state. I hope these statewide Portrait of a Graduate Rubric documents help you to adopt and utilize the Portrait to its fullest potential.

Sincerely,



Catherine Truitt

N.C. State Superintendent



PORTRAIT of a GRADUATE



INTRODUCTION

Fostering the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate Durable Skills – Adaptability, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Empathy, Learner’s Mindset, and Personal Responsibility – is imperative for student success.

Preparing our youth for strong postsecondary outcomes is the most important job of our public schools. Students deserve to graduate prepared for the post-graduation pathway of their choice, be it employment, enrollment in higher education, or enlistment in military service.

Research shows that in North Carolina, two thirds of the jobs in growing sectors require more than a high school diploma, and that employers seek both durable and technical skills.

Currently, test scores define school and student success, but future jobs demand more than testing acumen. According to the North Carolina Employer Needs Survey, businesses in North Carolina are having trouble finding entry-level talent who possess the skills necessary to be successful in the workplace. Additionally, non-profit education advocacy organization America Succeeds combed through 82 million job postings and discovered that about seven out of 10 skills requested by employers were durable skills. This led us to create a more relevant, multi-faceted tool that allows educators and school leaders to focus on the life-long, durable skills that students need to be successful no matter their post-secondary path.

In creating the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate in the fall of 2022, we set out to identify the most important durable skills that North Carolina employers seek. These skills were identified in grassroots regional conversations with multiple stakeholders throughout the state, both inside and outside of education. Through multiple virtual convenings, the seven skills were identified and then compared with more than two million North Carolina job postings. This comparison revealed that 77 percent of North Carolina job postings included at least one durable skill.

Meanwhile, trends across the country demonstrate a gap between what employers seek and the labor available. What does this mean for the next generation? It means that never has it been so important for students to receive the training necessary to help fill this demand. It also means the K-12 public school system can and should be the perfect partner to help satisfy these unmet workforce demands. Our schools represent 1.5 million North Carolina public school students, and they deserve to have the durable skills that employers deem as lacking in their current candidate pool. We must teach the necessary skills that every student needs to be successful, confident, and ready for a changing world.

For us in North Carolina, we know that means combining academic excellence with durable skill development in K-12 classrooms. Not only does this create better alignment between what employers are seeking in entry level talent, it also ensures that our students can adapt to whatever opportunities or obstacles that they may face after graduation. Education leaders must consider how global landscape shifts like the pace of change, the speed of innovation, and how the workforce is evolving impacts how — and what — our students learn in the classroom.

Finally, this approach has the overall benefit of promoting deeper learning in a more interactive and engaging classroom environment. As more resources are created by NCDPI and more districts adopt the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate, we will see not only alignment to post-secondary outcomes but students who thrive in school.

The set of North Carolina Durable Skills rubrics address grade bands K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 in each of the durable skills.

These rubrics can be used in many ways. They are designed to:

- Provide teachers with a tool for planning and providing feedback.
- Identify the criteria associated with each of the North Carolina Durable Skills.
- Describe important skills and dispositions.
- Illustrate a continuum of performance, including exemplary performance that exceeds expectations.
- Provide a common vocabulary for stakeholders.
- Support the design of learning experiences.
- Support student self-assessment.

How were the rubrics developed?

A team of more than 120 educators from across the state developed the rubrics. Many educational leaders and subject matter experts also provided helpful commentary to support revisions (see the end of this document for acknowledgements).

How do the rubrics connect to academic subject areas?

Deeper Learning occurs through the purposeful integration of rigorous academic content with experiences that intentionally cultivate durable skills. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) encourages the teaching of durable skills in students' academic classes through units anchored in content standards. The rubrics are applicable across all subject areas, from physical education to physics.



TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Using the Rubrics in Deeper Learning Unit and Lesson Design

Learning goals related to both content standards and durable skills are clearly defined in units and lessons that contain a strong foundation for deeper learning. Educators can use the rubrics to identify durable skills to integrate into lessons and units. The following are considerations:

- In the real world, durable skills are used in an integrated fashion. People use a variety of durable skills in any problem-solving scenario. A complex engineering design process, for example, calls upon a variety of durable skills (Adaptability, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, etc.) However, not every durable skill can or should be the focus of every lesson or unit.
- When selecting skills, narrow the focus. It can be cumbersome for teachers to address too many skills. In one unit, a teacher may elect to focus on two or three Critical Thinking criteria and one Adaptability criterion, for example.
- Be clear about which skills and indicators you plan to address.

[Download: Sample 3rd Grade Deeper Learning Performance Task Overview](#)

Facilitating Self-Reflection of Durable Skills

I Can Statements, derived from the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate Durable Skills rubrics, place students at the center of assessing and improving performance with durable skills. They are meant to be used by students to make sense of the durable skills, self-assess, and reflect about personal performance during and at the culmination of learning experiences. I Can Statements increase clarity about expectations and help students understand what they need to work towards.

Ingredients for Self-Reflection of Durable Skills:

- Engage students in engaging, challenging tasks that foster durable skills.
- Share relevant I Can Statements.
- Explicitly teach the targeted durable skills.
- Help students reflect on their application of durable skills during and at the culmination of the learning experience.

Using I Can Statements with Young Students

Even our youngest learners can reflect on their performance and growth with durable skills. Teachers can facilitate self-reflection by posting the relevant I Can Statements in the classroom and including visual aids to help emergent readers understand the meaning of the statements. At the launch of a lesson, share the targeted I Can Statement with students, unpack the meaning of any new vocabulary words, and give students an opportunity to practice explaining the I Can Statement in their own words. Using developmentally appropriate language, explain how they will practice the skills and how the learning experience will help them learn and grow. Teachers can use I Can Statements to have whole class, small group, or 1:1 developmentally appropriate conversations with students about their progress and steps that they can take to improve.

Goal Setting and Reflection with T-Charts

T-Charts are effective tools to help upper elementary and secondary students set and reflect about goals related to durable skills. (See sample T-Chart links at the bottom of this section.)

To prepare:

- Select a durable skill that you plan to address in a deeper learning lesson or unit.
- At the top of the chart, list the relevant I Can Statements.
- In the Reflection section, finalize the prompt.
- Map out/schedule opportunities for students to self-reflect.

How to Facilitate:

- Guide students through the process of filling out the T-Chart:
- Review the provided list of skills associated with the durable skill and select a skill on which to focus.
 - Fill out the T-Chart to unpack what it looks like and sounds like to demonstrate the durable skill.
 - Circle one behavior on which to focus for improvement throughout the experience.
- Facilitate opportunities for students to self-reflect about their application of the specific behaviors that they selected as a focus of improvement during the learning experience.
- Facilitate a final reflection.

Rubric Considerations for Exceptional Learners

Specially Designed Instruction (adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction, as appropriate to the needs of a student with an IEP) can ensure that all students access the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate Durable Skills. Graduates should be able to apply Specially Designed Instruction strategies to meet expectations with durable skills. Students with complex needs can demonstrate performance and growth based on their circumstances. In some instances, it may be appropriate to apply the grade level standards commensurate with the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance rather than actual grade assignment.

Download: Durable Skills T-Charts

<p>Grades 3-5</p>	<p><u>Adaptability</u></p> <p><u>Collaboration</u></p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p><u>Critical Thinking</u></p> <p><u>Empathy</u></p> <p><u>Learner’s Mindset</u></p> <p><u>Personal Responsibility</u></p>
<p>Grades 6-8</p>	<p><u>Adaptability</u></p> <p><u>Collaboration</u></p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p><u>Critical Thinking</u></p> <p><u>Empathy</u></p> <p><u>Learner’s Mindset</u></p> <p><u>Personal Responsibility</u></p>
<p>Grades 9-12</p>	<p><u>Adaptability</u></p> <p><u>Collaboration</u></p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <p><u>Critical Thinking</u></p> <p><u>Empathy</u></p> <p><u>Learner’s Mindset</u></p> <p><u>Personal Responsibility</u></p>



TIPS FOR SYSTEM AND SCHOOL LEADERS

Getting Started

Districts commonly ask, “How should I get started with implementation of the Portrait of a Graduate?” The first step is to develop understanding and consensus about the Portrait and each of the durable skills. This includes making the Portrait visible and available to all stakeholders and asking your Board of Education to ratify it. Next, invite a team to analyze the learning and assessment practices happening across the district and identify key practices that align to the Portrait, promote deeper learning, and foster durable skills. Plan professional learning experiences that help educators understand “The Why” regarding the Portrait, give insight about what durable skills look like in practice in the classroom, and illustrate sample shifts that support deeper learning.

District Spotlight: Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools

Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools serves more than 53,000 students in Pre-K through Grade 12 across 81 schools. Superintendent Tricia McManus’s approach to leading her district through the changes associated with integrating the Durable Skills rests on her recognition that this is deep work that “doesn’t happen overnight.” Throughout the district’s initial Portrait of a Graduate implementation phase, system leaders carefully messaged how and why the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate is an inspiring vision -- rather than “just an initiative.”

To get started with their implementation of the Portrait of a Graduate, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools senior staff engaged in a series of steps to build background about the durable skills and how to make the shift to deeper learning. This included reading and discussing articles, shadowing students, and discussing the current types of learning experiences happening across the system. They surveyed students about what it means to be engaged in learning and asked them to describe the characteristics of their most engaging learning experiences.

They also launched powerful conversations with principals and other school-based leaders in which they discussed the questions of “Where do we see pockets of excellence,” “How do we scale Deeper Learning,” and “How do we make the durable skills a reality for all students?”

Superintendent McManus elicited direct feedback from a newly formed Parent Advisory, the Superintendent Student Advisory, and the Teachers of the Year throughout the district. The leadership team planned intentional action steps that included the design and delivery of professional learning experiences during the Summer Leadership Institute and the Connected Learning Academy to support educators as they think about how to bring the Durable Skills to life in all classrooms during the 2023-2024 school year.

On June 28, 2023, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board of Education approved a measure to adopt the Portrait of Graduate Durable Skills. The district leadership team specifically asked for support to bring the Portrait to Practice and “make this how we do business in the district.”

Their next steps included:

- Site-based professional learning to foster understanding about the “why” of deeper learning and the Portrait of a Graduate.
- Back to School Kickoff to support the “why” of deeper learning and the Portrait of a Graduate.
- Collaboration between advisories to center the “why” of deeper learning and the Portrait of a Graduate.
- School visits with business leaders, students, and community leaders to witness exemplary learning at school.
- Launching the design of a Deeper Learning Framework and comprehensive professional development plan.

District Spotlight: Mooresville Graded School District

The Mooresville Graded School District is located in the town of Mooresville approximately 30 miles north of Charlotte in the Southern Piedmont region of North Carolina. A district of approximately 5,900 students, MGSD consists of three elementary schools, two intermediate schools, two middle schools, and one high school which includes an alternative learning academy. Mooresville’s vision is to create a better community by empowering every individual to grow, thrive, and succeed.

In 2022-2023, Superintendent Dr. Jason Gardner collaborated with stakeholders to develop the district’s 2023 - 2028 Strategic Plan. While engaging in ongoing conversations about durable skills and student readiness for the future, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee asked, “What is important for our students? What do we value? What do we want to produce in our graduates?”

“At the end of the day, we want to produce a graduate who has a clear plan for the future as well as the skills needed to execute the plan,” said Dr. Gardner.

Mooresville’s Strategic Plan includes the following goal and strategy to bring the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate to life across the system:

- **Goal:** Develop skills, K-12, aligned to the NC Portrait of a Graduate.
- **Strategy:** Develop a plan to ensure that NC Portrait of a Graduate durable skills (ability to adapt, to collaborate, to communicate, to think critically, to show empathy, to learn, and to take personal responsibility) are embedded into content area instruction K-12.

The District will administer a student perception survey to gather feedback about learning experiences and opportunities to practice durable skills. The survey will enable district leadership to capture baseline data that they will use to create a SMART goal connected to the Strategic Plan.

Dr. Gardner is using a “move slow to go fast” approach to the work that centers on helping educators develop deep understanding about durable skills and promotes reflection about ways in which they are currently being fostered in learning experiences. Teams of educators will next analyze lessons and units to look for opportunities for more intentional integration of durable skills.

In 2014, MGSD launched “Gateway Projects” in four grade bands. Projects include an investigation, creation of a high-quality written product, a multimedia product, and a presentation to an authentic audience. As a next step, Mooresville educators will refine the Gateway Projects to more strategically integrate durable skills and incorporate opportunities for self-reflection.

When describing his initial steps and messaging around bringing the Portrait to practice, Dr. Gardner said, “This should fit inside existing work. It isn’t a totally new initiative. Teachers are already facilitating opportunities to develop durable skills. We’re being *more intentional* and getting better at this. We’re identifying opportunities to integrate and practice the skills in a more robust way.”



HOW CAN DISTRICTS HELP EDUCATORS USE THE RUBRICS?

Video Analysis and Rubric Jigsaw

Initially, educators will benefit from understanding the criteria associated with each rubric, how the skills progress from grade to grade, and the skill expectations for their grade level. A Video Analysis and Rubric Jigsaw can be an effective strategy to develop shared understanding among district staff. The following is a sample process:

Video Analysis

- Select a durable skill to analyze.
- Form teams.
- Watch a video featuring a deeper learning lesson or unit.
- Discuss in teams: *What skills associated with the durable skill did students demonstrate?*

Rubric Jigsaw

- Assign each person in the team to one rubric criteria.
- Individually, review the assigned criteria (“Meeting Expectations” column). Be prepared to share the following information with the team:
 - *This criterion focuses on...*
 - *An example of the way in which the performance expectations change as grade levels increase is...*
 - *In my opinion, students featured in the video (did/did not) have an opportunity to demonstrate this criterion because...*
- Using the sentence stems provided, take turns introducing your assigned criterion to your teammates. Allocate two minutes per person.

Download: Video Analysis and Rubric Jigsaw Handouts

- [Critical Thinking Rubric Jigsaw Part 1: Video Analysis](#)
- [Critical Thinking Rubric Jigsaw Part 2: Rubric Jigsaw](#)

Building a Library of Exemplary Resources

To support educators, leaders, and instructional support staff, districts can build a library of exemplary resources, units, and student work for your school district related to the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate Durable Skills:

- Resources related to specific skills (graphic organizers, protocols, etc.).
- Deeper learning units and lesson plans.
- Exemplary student work.

Use the rubrics to organize the exemplars by durable skill and criteria, using folders or tags.

Structures that Prepare Students for Self-Reflection of Durable Skills

North Carolina students should be able to present a culminating reflection in which they accurately reflect on each of the durable skills using evidence (concrete examples), identify areas of strength and weakness, set goals, and identify strategies for improvement.

There are a variety of district-wide structures that can prepare students to engage in a culminating reflection. Examples include:

- **Deeper Learning Performance Tasks:** Require students to show learning of content standards, demonstrate targeted durable skills, and reflect upon their performance and growth. Students reflect on grade-appropriate durable skills at the start of a task using a rubric or I Can Statements, set goals, and use evidence to reflect on their performance throughout the task.
- **Capstone Projects:** Offer opportunities for students to investigate topics of personal interest with increased independence. Capstones include a public reflection in which students describe performance and growth with durable skills.
- **Passages or Portfolio Exhibitions:** Offer opportunity for students to share a collection of artifacts that show evidence of durable skills, reflect on performance and growth with the skills over time, and identify specific strategies to improve.

In the next phase of the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate work (Phase III), NCDPI will publish a set of sample Deeper Learning Performance Tasks across a variety of grade levels and subject areas. Districts can incorporate the tasks into structures that systematically foster durable skills over time and prepare students to engage in a culminating reflection of learning.

DOWNLOAD: PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

	Rubrics	I Can Statements
Grades K-2	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility
Grades 3-5	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility
Grades 6-8	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility
Grades 9-12	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility	Adaptability Collaboration Communication Critical Thinking Empathy Learner’s Mindset Personal Responsibility

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