

Alignment: Portrait to Practice Building Strong Foundations: Howard-Suamico School District Aligns Learning & Life Skills

OVERVIEW

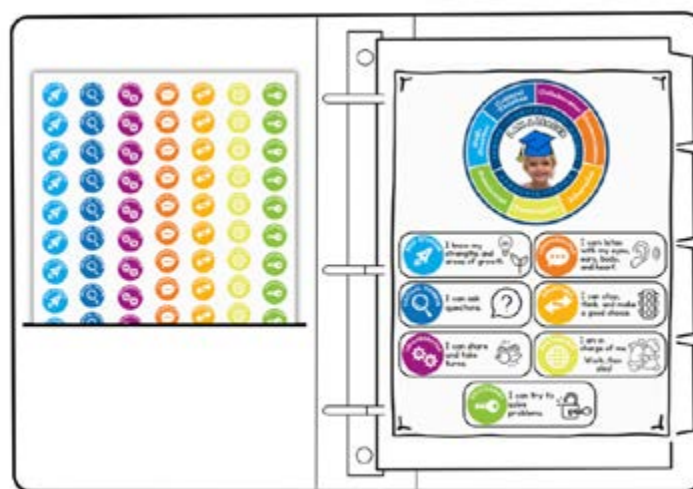
Howard-Suamico School District (Wisconsin) partnered with the AASA District Services team on Portrait to Practice Frameworks for Learning work to assist in developing a framework to align curriculum. These foundational steps have enabled the district to embed its Graduate Profile life skills into everyday learning, deepen student ownership, and ensure consistency across grade levels.

THE CHALLENGE

- Howard-Suamico serves about 5,879 students across eight schools and multiple preschool sites.
- The district had adopted a Graduate Profile, but moving from vision to implementation revealed gaps: inconsistent articulation of what deeper learning looks like across grades; variable success criteria and assessment; and curriculum not always aligned to support the Graduate Profile life skills.
- Teachers wanted clarity about what success looks like (learning intentions, success criteria) across content areas, while students needed more voice and ownership in learning.

WHAT WE DID

- Helped align curriculum across the district in a way that establishes learning intentions and success criteria for deeper learning in each content area, grade level, and integrating life skills from the Graduate Profile.
- Facilitated alignment work, ensuring what is taught and expected in lower grades builds into what happens in later grades in terms of both content and life skills. This included mapping how skills are scaffolded across grades.
- Conducted asset mapping: what resources, teacher strengths, professional learning structures, assessments, and instructional strategies already exist that align to the Graduate Profile as well as identifying gaps.



GP Stickers in front pocket of each portfolio.

Graduate Profile "I" statements as a landing page (North Star).
HS-2 and 3-4 templates

KEY IMPACTS

- Staff perception data reveals that aligning the Graduate Profile within the curriculum has brought more clarity to teachers.
- Classroom walkthroughs and teacher collaboration reflect a transformation in how teams function. PLCs are moving beyond pacing and coverage to focus on student performance and Graduate Profile development. Teachers are now using common learning intentions and success criteria aligned to the Graduate Profile, sharing strategies, and developing resources for student self-assessment and reflection, leading to improved instructional practices and greater coherence.
- Students are increasingly involved in assessing their own learning, understanding what deeper learning means, and participating in designing learning tasks with greater autonomy.
- Alignment means lower grade learning builds toward upper grade expectations; district frameworks support smoother transitions and more coherent progression of life skill development.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Implementing clear success criteria across content and grades makes expectations visible and helps avoid drift.
- Teachers need concrete support—professional learning, shared examples, common language—to enact deeper learning in authentic ways.
- Student involvement adds authenticity and increases buy-in among both students and teachers.
- Asset mapping helps not just to see gaps but to leverage existing strengths to accelerate alignment.



Call to Action

Frameworks for Learning is essential in putting a district vision into action. Without it, even the best vision remains aspirational. Howard-Suamico's example shows how this work creates clarity, coherence, and momentum. The Frameworks for Learning service helps districts build this groundwork so that life skills and academic standards are not separate but integrated into daily learning.