Connecticut High School Graduation Requirements Unpacked
Brief 5: Mastery-Based Diploma Assessment

> **New Graduation Requirements:** "(c)Commencing with classes graduating in 2023, and for each graduating class thereafter, no local or regional board of education shall permit any student to graduate from high school or grant a diploma to any student who has not satisfactorily completed a minimum of twenty-five credits, including [...] (6) a **one credit mastery-based diploma assessment**."
>
> — Public Act No.17-42; Sec. 1(c)(6)

This week's Connecticut High School Graduation Requirements Unpacked brief focuses on the mastery-based diploma assessment requirement. One option for how a school or district could design their mastery-based diploma assessment is to build these assessments around their Portrait of a Graduate competencies or the cross-curricular, 21st century skills that schools define for NEASC accreditation. These competencies are the cross-curricular skills and knowledge that every graduate needs to be successful. Frequently these competencies include standards like communication and problem solving. Schools, districts, and communities work together to collaboratively define the essential skills and knowledge all graduates need to live healthy and productive lives. This work is often incorporated into a portrait of a graduate document or aligned to a school or district's mission and vision work.

Below is an example of a Portrait of a Graduate.

Forest Lake High School
Portrait of a Graduate

Communication

Every Forest Lake graduate will be a **clear communicator**, able to effectively express themselves and listen to the ideas of others.

Problem Solving

Every Forest Lake graduate will be a **skilled problem-solver**, prepared to creatively tackle the challenges of life, citizenship, and work.

Informed Thinking

Every Forest Lake graduate will be **an informed thinker**, crafting arguments that build on reason and logic.

Self Direction

Every Forest Lake graduate will be **a self-directed person** in their lives and in the way they engage with their community and the world.

Collaboration

Every Forest Lake graduate will be **a skilled collaborator** understanding how to enhance their work in partnership with other people who bring different and needed perspectives.
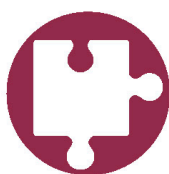
Image 1: Portrait of a Graduate pg. 1

COMMUNICATION	PROBLEM SOLVING	INFORMED THINKING	SELF DIRECTION	COLLABORATION
A Forest Lake Graduate will	A Forest Lake Graduate will	A First Lake Graduate will	A Forest Lake Graduate will	A Forest Lake Graduate will
■ Demonstrate organized communication through varied modes (oral, written, visual and/or performance).	■ Observe and evaluate situations in order to define problems.	■ Apply knowledge across disciplines and contexts and to real-life situations.	■ Apply knowledge to set goals, make decisions and assess new opportunities. (NHPS)	■ Participate in and contribute to the community.
■ Use evidence and logic purposefully in communication.	■ Frame questions, make predictions, and design data collection and analysis strategies.	■ Analyze, evaluate and synthesize information from multiple sources to frame questions and draw conclusions.	■ Demonstrates initiative, reliability and concern for quality.	■ Demonstrate awareness and consideration for self and others.
■ Listen actively to others and analyze and respond to the information or viewpoints presented.	■ Identify and analyze patterns, trends and relationships in the data or information.	■ Develop and use a model (2D or 3D visual representation) to represent or explain a system, process or complex concept.	■ Demonstrate flexibility, including the ability to incorporate new ideas and revise.	■ Demonstrate knowledge of and respect for diverse cultures, identities and perspectives.
■ Use tone, style, and conventions that are appropriate to the audience, context, and purpose.	■ Based on analysis of the data or information, generate options and use evidence to build a case for the best solution.	■ Apply systems thinking to analyze and explain the interaction and influence of related parts on each other, and on outcomes.		■ Practice responsible digital citizenship as a member of a community.
■ Use technology purposefully to enhance the communication of ideas and information.	■ Identify opportunities for innovation and collaboration.			■ Select and use communication strategies and interpersonal skills to collaborate with others.
	■ Evaluate the available tools, including technology, and select one to address the problem.			
	■ Persist in solving challenging problems, adapting strategies and approaches as needed.			

Image 2: Portrait of a Graduate pg.2

The Forest Lake Portrait of a Graduate above identifies five competencies that are essential for all graduates to master. These competencies are: communication, problem solving, informed thinking, self-direction, and collaboration. Once schools and districts have defined their competencies, they need to describe the discrete skills and knowledge that make up each competency (also known as performance indicators), and then performance levels (or scoring criteria) for each of those indicators.

Forest Lake has also created some sample competencies, performance indicators, and scoring criteria for communication, problem solving, informed thinking, self-direction, and collaboration available here. Below is a sample of the communication scoring criteria. Notice how these indicators are aligned to the Portrait of a Graduate language and expectations. This scoring criteria also focuses on what moves we see students make as they are working toward proficiency in communication–as opposed to describing what students are not yet doing or demonstrating. When a student reads this scoring criteria, they know exactly what they need to do in order to demonstrate mastery of a specific competency.

All of the Forest Lake High School scoring criteria aligned to each of the defined Portrait of a Graduate competencies are available here for use and modification. Here are some additional resources and information about how to design and craft your own scoring criteria.

Forest Lake High School
Scoring Criteria

COMMUNICATION

Performance Indicator	1	2	3	4
A. Demonstrate organized communication through varied modes (oral, written, visual and/or performance).	I can • repeat information that has been presented to me when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).	I can • organize information to communicate my ideas and responses when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).	I can • present information and ideas coherently, with logical sequence when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).	I can • enhance my communication through the sequence and presentation of ideas when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).
B. Use evidence and logic purposefully in communication.	I can • identify evidence that could relate to my purpose; • share ideas that relate to my purpose.	I can • select evidence that connects to my purpose; • organize and present ideas based on my purpose.	I can • incorporate evidence that enhances purposeful communication; • Use sound reasoning to explain my ideas and achieve my purpose.	I can • incorporate the most relevant and effective evidence to justify my purpose; • Use sound reasoning to explain ideas and address counterarguments to achieve my purpose.
C. Listen actively to others and analyze and respond to the information or viewpoints presented.	I can • participate as a listener in a variety of discussions, presentations, videos, etc.; • identify information gathered through active listening.	I can • gather information through active listening (including during discussions, presentations, videos, etc.) and determine main ideas and patterns; • connect information gathered through active listening to my ideas.	I can • analyze information gathered through active listening (including during discussions, presentations, videos, etc.) and determine relevance; • integrate relevant information gathered through active listening into my argument or response.	I can • evaluate information gathered through active listening (including during discussions, presentations, videos, etc.) considering context and type of presentation, to determine reliability; • artfully integrate information gathered through active listening to draw conclusions and justify my response.

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1

Image 3: Sample Scoring Criteria | Communication

After a school or district has fully defined their competencies and performance levels, they can begin to craft task models for each competency. A task model is a set of characteristics or qualities that a task would need to have in order for a student to demonstrate a specific competency. Task models create the

conditions for students to follow their passion and have choice in their assessment. They allow students to create unique tasks to demonstrate their mastery of a given competency or set of competencies. As long as every task contains the elements captured in the task model, students have the freedom to design tasks or complete the task of their choosing. A Forest Lake task model that would elicit evidence of a student's communication mastery is below:

Forest Lake High School
Task Model

COMMUNICATION

Performance Indicators for Communication:

A. Demonstrate organized communication through varied modes (oral, written, visual and/or performance).
B. Use evidence and logic purposefully in communication
C. Listen actively to others and analyze and respond to the information or viewpoints presented.
D. Use tone, style, and conventions that are appropriate to the audience, context, and purpose.
E. Use technology purposefully to enhance the communication of ideas and information.

Task Model
Any Performance Assessment that is designed to elicit student work that will allow the student to demonstrate proficiency in **Communication** must include these elements:

· The student will engage with and synthesize various types of informational text or other informational sources such as graphs, charts, pictures, interviews, surveys, videos or other sources. (Performance Indicators B & C).
· The student will participate in collaborative discussion about their topic (Performance Indicator C).
· The student will create a text, presentation or other product that draws on information/ideas **from that discussion, as well as from other sources**, to communicate a claim and to support that claim with evidence. (Performance Indicators A, B, C, D & E).
· The student text or presentation must utilize technology in order to incorporate images, graphs, charts, audio, video or other effects into the support for the claim (Performance Indicator E).

Image 4: Task Model for Communication

Schools may also decide to design some specific tasks that align to their task models. Here are some tasks (and associated instructional materials) aligned to three of the Portrait of a Graduate competencies and their corresponding task models. All of these tasks could be used in their current form as a mastery-based diploma assessment or modified to fit local context.

Communication

- Sample Task (Math): Free Throw Adjustments

- Sample Task (Health): Health in Our Town

- Sample Task (Biology): Wildlife and Lyme Disease

Problem-Solving

- Sample Task (English Language Arts, Art): The Change We Can See

Informed-Thinking

- Sample Task (Social Studies): Laws That Work, Laws That Don't: The Consequences of Legislation

For a mastery-based diploma assessment, we would recommend that students choose one competency aligned to your school/district's defined 21st Century Skills or Portrait of a Graduate competencies for their assessment. Once a student has chosen a specific competency (for example: communication), they would then complete a task of their own design or one designed by educators in your school/s that is aligned to the task model associated with that specific competency.

There are a variety of mechanisms for this to happen. A student could complete their mastery-based diploma assessment as part of one of their courses (for example, a student could complete the "Health in Our Town" assessment as part of their Health course). A student could present their teacher-designed or their student-designed mastery-based diploma assessment to a faculty advisor or a panel of experts. A mastery-based diploma assessment could be part of an independent study, advisory structure, or a capstone project.

Below are some design question for consideration as you are designing the mastery-based diploma assessment in your own school or district.

Design Questions for Consideration

1. Does your school or district have cross-curricular, 21st Century Skills, or Portrait of a Graduate Competencies that you can use as the basis of your mastery-based diploma assessment?

2. Does your school or district currently have scoring criteria for those skills or competencies?

3. Will your school or district create its own scoring criteria or build from previously created scoring criteria, incorporating pieces of your own vision?

4. What are the features of a task that would allow a student to demonstrate mastery of a specific competency?

5. Will you create the conditions for students to design their own tasks? Will you embed the mastery-based diploma assessment in a specific course or in an already established structure in your school?

6. How will the student demonstrate their mastery? Through a demonstration? Through the finished product of the task? Will there be a standard process or will students choose how they demonstrate mastery?

7. What resources will teachers have to inform and support their ongoing professional learning?

Additional Resources

1. Sample Scoring Criteria: Communication

2. Sample Scoring Criteria: Problem Solving

3. Sample Scoring Criteria: Informed Thinking

4. Sample Scoring Criteria: Self-direction

5. Sample Scoring Criteria: Collaboration

6. Verifying Proficiency: Scoring Criteria

7. Sample Task Models

For More Information

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