

**Oakwood Schools**  
**Portrait of a Learner Feedback Summary**  
**September 25, 2025**

## **Oakwood Schools: Portrait of a Learner - Key Themes**

This summary outlines key themes derived from feedback sessions with various student, staff, and community groups.

### **Theme 1: Beyond Academics - Fostering Well-Rounded Individuals**

The feedback from all groups consistently highlighted that success in life extends far beyond traditional academic achievement. There is a strong desire to see students develop into happy, well-adjusted, and engaged individuals.

- **Student Perspective:**
  - **High School:** Students defined success as having strong personal values, being a "driving force" in the community, and living without regret. They also expressed a desire for experiences that push them outside their comfort zone and into the wider world beyond Oakwood.
  - **Junior High:** Students emphasized the importance of resilience, leadership, and a growth mindset. They want to be seen as a positive influence on others and a resource for their peers.
  - **Elementary:** Younger students defined success in terms of kindness, hard work, and respecting others. They see their future careers tied to a sense of purpose, whether it's helping people, animals, or the environment.
- **Community Perspective:**
  - Community members want students to be "happy" and "contributing" to society. They stressed the importance of well-being, strong connections, and the ability to be an individual while still contributing to a team.
  - They also want students to be "good citizens" who are involved in democracy, volunteerism, and caring for others beyond the community's borders.

### **Theme 2: Developing Essential Skills for an Evolving World**

There is a clear consensus on the need for students to acquire a specific set of skills that will prepare them for an uncertain future, particularly in the face of new technologies like AI.

- **Communication & Collaboration:**
  - **Students:** High schoolers emphasized the importance of public speaking and the ability to "communicate and work with different types of people." Junior high students noted the need to "work with others" and "help others rise up."

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- **Community:** Community members highlighted the need for students to "engage in civil discourse," have "in-person conversations," and "collaborate with others for a common good."
- **Adaptability & Resilience:**
  - **Students:** High school students expressed concern about AI's impact on career choices and the need to be "able to adapt." Junior high students repeatedly mentioned the ability to "bounce back and overcome challenges." Elementary students also referenced being "coachable" and accepting that things "don't have to be perfect."
  - **Community:** Community members want students to be "flexible," "able to pivot," and "able to fail and navigate it."
- **Critical Thinking & Resourcefulness:**
  - **Students:** High schoolers noted the value of "inquisitiveness" and the desire to "explore the 'what if!'"
  - **Community:** Community members listed critical thinking, problem-solving, and discernment as key skills. They want students to be "resourceful enough to solve problems" and to "ask why."

**Theme 3: The Need for Real-World Experiences**

Students and community members alike expressed a desire for more opportunities to connect classroom learning with practical, hands-on experiences.

- **Student Perspective:**
  - **High School:** Students called for career exploration opportunities, including earning credit for work experiences and having professionals come in to speak about their careers. They also want to see and explore communities outside of Oakwood.
  - **Junior High:** Students believe taking different classes and participating in sports and clubs helps them "meet new people and explore new ideas."
  - **Elementary:** Elementary students were particularly enthusiastic about field trips, suggesting trips to hospitals, zoos, and even Kings Island to see concepts from textbooks in person.
- **Community & Staff Perspective:**
  - **Community:** Community members stressed that "providing new experiences" is a "valuable path to learning" and that "field trips are important because many students don't have access to see things outside of their home." They also suggested experiences like volunteering, shadowing, and attending a naturalization ceremony.

**Oakwood Schools**  
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**September 25, 2025**

- **Staff:** Teachers expressed concern about creating "functional adults" and noted the limited nature of current pre-apprenticeship and CTE programs. They suggested integrating career-oriented language and experiences into existing curricula to bring more awareness to these opportunities.

**Theme 4: A Culture of Compassion and Personal Connection**

The desire for a school environment that prioritizes kindness, empathy, and personal connection was a recurring theme across all age groups.

- **Student Perspective:**
  - **High School:** Students defined success as being empathetic, working for others, and being able to "connect to those you work with."
  - **Junior High:** Students hoped to be "known as a friend" and "a resource to help others."
  - **Elementary:** Students consistently mentioned kindness and respect as essential for success. They highlighted the patience of their teachers and the importance of "listening to others' opinions."
- **Community Perspective:**
  - Community members listed "kindness," "fairness," and "care for other people" as top skills. They want students to "do no harm" and to "have a sense of self" while still being able to "work together."

**Theme 5: Defining the "Why" and Gaining Buy-In**

Teachers and community members emphasized the importance of a clear and consistent message about the purpose of the Portrait of a Learner initiative.

- **Staff:** A small representative group of teachers expressed the need for clear communication about the "why, what, and how" and for the Portrait to be a "guiding star" so that it does not become a fleeting trend.
- **Community:** Community members implicitly supported this idea by offering detailed, thoughtful feedback that indicates a strong desire for a tangible, actionable plan.