

# Oakwood Schools

## Portrait of a Learner - Staff Feedback Summary

### October 2025

89 Responses

#### **Q1: What mindsets and dispositions do you believe are essential for student career and life success?**

The responses highlight several essential mindsets and dispositions for student career and life success, emphasizing resilience, flexibility, empathy, and a growth mindset. Curiosity and problem-solving are recurrent themes, underscoring the value of adaptability and perseverance. The importance of self-awareness, and social-awareness is noted, with an emphasis on respect, kindness, and effective communication. There is also a focus on leadership, motivation, and being teachable, as well as balancing life and school responsibilities. Overall, qualities like grit, creativity, discipline, and a positive attitude toward adversity are considered vital for achieving meaningful success.

- **Resilience & Perseverance** - Resilience and perseverance were frequently mentioned as crucial attributes for students to succeed in their careers and lives. Participants believe that being able to bounce back from challenges and maintain determination in the face of adversity is vital. The perception is that these qualities help students navigate difficult periods, fostering a sense of empowerment and capability. Resilience is often linked to the ability to learn from failures and setbacks, which contributes to personal growth and development. The associations with resilience range from pure perseverance to a broader understanding of being adaptable and flexible in various situations.
- **Growth Mindset** - A growth mindset is perceived as essential for students' success, encouraging them to embrace challenges and persist despite obstacles. Participants view it as a foundation for continual learning and adaptability, allowing students to evolve and improve consistently. Emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning and curiosity, a growth mindset fosters an openness to new ideas and perspectives. The ability to see failure as an opportunity for growth rather than a setback is a pivotal part of this mindset. Participants believe it builds resilience and motivates students to seek out and conquer new opportunities.
- **Empathy & Kindness** - Empathy and kindness are seen as vital dispositions for student success, emphasizing the importance of understanding and respecting others. Participants believe that these traits enhance interpersonal relationships and support collaborative teamwork. Showing empathy is also linked to being considerate of the collective good, creating a positive and inclusive social environment. The perception is that empathetic individuals are better equipped to navigate diverse social contexts, which enriches both personal and professional interactions. This category highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering meaningful connections and cooperative efforts.

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- Flexibility & Adaptability - Flexibility and adaptability are recognized as crucial attributes for students facing the dynamic nature of career paths and life challenges. Participants emphasize the ability to adjust to new circumstances and to be open to change as significant factors for success. This disposition enables students to cope with unexpected situations and effectively manage transitions, both personally and professionally. The perception is that adaptability fosters resilience, equipping students with the skills to handle various scenarios competently. The emphasis is on the importance of maintaining a flexible mindset to ensure growth and success in a changing world.
- Curiosity & Critical Thinking - Curiosity and critical thinking are viewed as essential for driving student success, sparking a desire for knowledge and innovation. Participants suggest that curious students are motivated to explore and engage with new concepts, fostering a proactive learning environment. This mindset is associated with the ability to question assumptions and analyze information, which enhances decision-making and problem-solving skills. The perception is that a curious and critically thinking student is more prepared to navigate complexities and pursue creative solutions. Encouraging curiosity helps sustain lifelong learning habits and supports academic and personal growth.

#### **Q2: What mindsets and dispositions do you believe all graduates should have?**

Graduates should embody gentleness, resourcefulness, self-discipline, as well as the courage to explore, question, and contribute to their communities. Important mindsets include critical thinking, humility, curiosity, listening, and collaboration, alongside adaptability and resilience. Emphasis on empathy, emotional regulation, and clear communication is crucial. Graduates must possess a positive impact, work ethic, and motivation, with openness to learning and growth mindset. Traits such as flexibility, analytical thinking, integrity, and compassion should coexist with respect and responsibility, enabling them to pursue paths leading to societal contributions and personal fulfillment.

- Resilience and Persistence - Resilience and persistence are emphasized across multiple responses, reflecting a belief in the graduates' ability to face and overcome challenges. The participants perceive these qualities as crucial for dealing with inevitable failures and obstacles life will present. This mindset is considered not just beneficial, but necessary for success in various life pursuits. Resilience is often paired with adaptability and a growth mindset, illustrating the importance of learning from setbacks and the continuous pursuit of goals. Overall, resilience represents endurance and the capacity to continue striving toward long-term objectives despite potential setbacks.

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- Curiosity and Lifelong Learning - Curiosity and the commitment to lifelong learning are frequently mentioned as essential mindsets for graduates. Participants underscore the importance of maintaining a desire to ask questions, explore new ideas, and engage in continuous personal and professional growth. This disposition is seen as a driver for innovation, creativity, and an informed engagement with the world. The willingness to learn and wonder about diverse topics is valued for its potential to expand an individual's horizons and adaptability. The narratives around this category emphasize a future-oriented mindset, suggesting that being curious leads to more opportunities and personal fulfillment.
- Empathy and Social Awareness - Empathy and social awareness emerge as significant elements of the desired mindsets for graduates. The ability to understand and relate to others is seen as vital in building meaningful relationships and contributing positively to society. These traits are often connected with communication skills, collaboration, and cultural competence, suggesting a comprehensive approach to interpersonal interactions. Participants view empathy not only as an emotional skill but as a critical component of social responsibility and ethical living. Graduates with high social awareness are perceived to be more effective in communal and professional settings, promoting cooperation and understanding.
- Adaptability and Flexibility - Adaptability and flexibility are consistently highlighted as essential attributes for graduates navigating an ever-changing world. The ability to adjust to new situations and modify behavior accordingly is regarded as a key to personal and career success. Participants stress the importance of flexibility in thinking and the capacity to embrace new challenges as opportunities for growth. This mindset is associated with open-mindedness and the willingness to learn, underscoring the dynamic nature of modern life and work environments. Overall, adaptability is praised for preparing graduates to face diverse circumstances and thrive in uncertainty.
- Work Ethic and Determination - Having a strong work ethic and determination is viewed as a cornerstone for achieving one's goals by many participants. This category encapsulates qualities such as grit, motivation, and the ambition to complete endeavors they start, including their educational journeys. Graduates are encouraged to cultivate diligence and perseverance, as these attributes are seen as foundational to both personal and professional achievements. Participants perceive a strong work ethic as indicative of a responsible, committed individual who can be relied upon to perform tasks effectively and efficiently. Determination is widely regarded as a powerful driver that enables graduates to pursue their aspirations persistently.

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#### Q3: Which non-academic traits do you intentionally help students develop?

The responses highlight a range of non-academic traits intentionally fostered in students, including resilience, empathy, kindness, and responsibility. Many emphasize coping skills, communication, and problem-solving abilities, along with fostering positive self-esteem and emotional regulation. Traits such as curiosity, gratitude, and integrity are valued, alongside the ability to collaborate and respect others. Encouraging students to embrace failure as growth and helping them cultivate skills like cooperation, teamwork, and understanding are central themes. A focus on building confidence, listening skills, and interpersonal skills is evident, aiming to develop well-rounded individuals prepared for future challenges.

- Kindness and Empathy - Many educators highlighted kindness and empathy as crucial non-academic traits to develop in students. Emphasizing how these traits foster a supportive and understanding classroom environment, educators perceive these as foundational to positive interactions and personal growth. The responses reflect a strong belief in mutual respect and caring as essential building blocks for students' social development. Participants also noted the importance of service, acceptance, and gratitude as extensions of kindness. Overall, this category was the most frequently mentioned, indicating its perceived value in creating a harmonious and inclusive learning community.
- Resilience and Grit - Resilience and grit were repeatedly mentioned as necessary traits for student development. Educators stressed the ability to cope with challenges and persevere through difficult situations as key skills that prepare students for future success. This category is perceived as vital for enabling students to handle setbacks productively and is linked with encouraging a growth mindset. Traits like tenacity, flexibility, and problem-solving were associated with developing resilience. The emphasis on resilience reflects educators' commitment to preparing students for a dynamic and often unpredictable world.
- Communication and Collaboration - The ability to communicate effectively and work collaboratively was highlighted as an important skill set in students' non-academic development. Participants pointed out verbal and nonverbal communication, teamwork, and listening skills as vital components of this category. Educators view these skills as essential for fostering interpersonal relationships and facilitating successful group interactions. Traits such as improved communication, cooperation, and community care were linked to this category. Overall, these skills are seen as crucial for students to engage constructively within different social settings and future workplaces.

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- Self-Esteem and Confidence - Building self-esteem and confidence in students was a recurring theme among educators. Participants described these traits as crucial for empowering students to take risks, engage in self-reflection, and pursue personal growth. Confidence building is linked with fostering independence and helping students recognize their self-worth and potential. Educators pointed out the role of a positive self-image in aiding respectful disagreement and the willingness to face vulnerabilities. This category reflects a belief that self-assured students are better equipped to tackle academic and personal challenges.
- Responsibility and Independence - Responsibility and independence were noted as essential non-academic traits that facilitate student maturity and self-regulation. Educators highlighted the development of these traits as a means of fostering accountability and personal initiative. Emphasis was placed on the importance of students taking responsibility for their actions and learning to be self-reliant. Traits like integrity, being responsible for oneself, and a growth mindset relate to this category. The focus on responsibility and independence underscores educators' aim to prepare students for self-directed learning and responsible citizenship.

#### **Q4: How do you currently foster student agency and ownership of learning?**

Educators foster student agency and ownership of learning through diverse strategies such as promoting student choice, self-reflection, goal setting, and individual accountability. These approaches include offering tailored assignments, encouraging self-assessment and peer feedback, and enabling students to manage their progress and set personal goals. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of responsibility, active participation, independence, and problem-solving skills. Some educators advocate for creating opportunities for growth and understanding beyond traditional grading systems, while others focus on preparing high school students for higher education by instilling a sense of personal priority in education.

#### **Q5: How would you describe a future-ready person?**

A future-ready person embodies strong work ethic, effective communication, and continuous engagement in lifelong learning. They are adaptable, resilient, and possess problem-solving capabilities, balancing confidence with a willingness to embrace change. Equipped with digital literacy and foundational skills, they maintain emotional intelligence and cultural humility. They exhibit kindness, responsibility, and a growth mindset. Such individuals demonstrate grit, determination, and a commitment to personal and societal contributions. They navigate challenges through critical thinking, creativity, and persistent effort, while maintaining compassion and openness to new experiences and knowledge.

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#### **Q6: What role does our school culture play in shaping who students become?**

School culture plays a significant role in shaping students through shared expectations, clear communication, and leadership opportunities, supporting both emotional and academic growth. A positive environment provides safety for exploration, reinforced by role models and peers. Culture reflects desired behaviors, encourages mistakes and growth, and prioritizes respect, responsibility, and relationships. It impacts students' values, attitudes, and self-esteem, promoting authentic experiences and confidence in real-world settings. Celebrating growth over achievement and maintaining high learning standards ensure students develop not just academically but holistically, readying them for future challenges and transformations.

#### **Q7: If every student left with one mindset or disposition you helped them develop, what would it be?**

The responses reveal a diverse array of mindsets and dispositions, emphasizing qualities such as problem-solving, gratitude, confidence, kindness, and empathy. Additionally, fostering these attributes includes promoting self-regulation amidst anxiety, adopting strong questioning skills, entertaining new ideas without judgment, and embracing the importance of work ethic and humility. Encouraging students to be open and vulnerable, take pride in their work, and nurture positive relationships are also highlighted. Teachers hope students leave with an optimistic, responsible, and inquisitive outlook, ready to face challenges, make good decisions, and be their best selves.

- Empathy and Kindness - Empathy and kindness emerged as a dominant theme in the responses, emphasizing the importance of understanding others and treating them with compassion. Participants frequently mentioned the need for students to cultivate empathy and kindness in their interactions, highlighting how these qualities could positively impact their personal and professional lives. This category reflects a belief that fostering empathy will lead to stronger, more meaningful relationships, and a more harmonious society. Participants value these qualities as foundational for collaboration, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. The responses suggest a strong conviction that empathy and kindness are crucial skills for navigating the complexities of modern life.
- Resilience and Problem-Solving - Resilience and problem-solving were frequently mentioned as critical dispositions for students to develop. Responses highlighted the importance of perseverance, determination, and the ability to navigate challenges, emphasizing that growth often comes from struggle. Participants noted that fostering a mindset of resilience and viewing problems as opportunities to learn and grow would significantly benefit students. This category suggests a belief in the empowering nature of problem-solving skills and resilience. Participants view these traits as essential for overcoming obstacles and achieving success in various life endeavors.

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- Personal Growth and Self-Belief - Personal growth and self-belief were highlighted as vital mindsets for students to develop. Participants expressed a desire for students to believe in their ability to achieve their goals and to view themselves as capable individuals. This category underscores the importance of self-confidence and the willingness to engage in continuous learning and self-improvement. There is a clear perception that fostering a growth mindset and self-belief will enhance students' ability to face challenges and pursue their aspirations. Participants regard this outlook as crucial for attaining personal fulfillment and success.
- Gratitude and Humility - Gratitude and humility were identified as important dispositions for students to develop. Participants stressed the value of maintaining a humble attitude and recognizing and appreciating the positive aspects of their lives. The responses imply that fostering gratitude and humility can contribute to personal well-being and improved relationships. These qualities are perceived as essential for a balanced and content life, allowing students to navigate successes and failures with grace. Overall, the emphasis on gratitude and humility reflects a belief in their potential to enhance personal and communal well-being.
- Critical Thinking and Inquisitiveness - Critical thinking and inquisitiveness were mentioned as crucial qualities for students to develop. Participants expressed the desire for students to cultivate strong questioning skills and a curiosity that drives them to explore and understand diverse perspectives. This category emphasizes the importance of intellectual growth and the ability to engage with complex ideas critically. The perception among participants is that critical thinking and inquisitiveness are key to lifelong learning and informed decision-making. Fostering these dispositions is seen as essential for personal development and the ability to contribute meaningfully to society.