



2026

GREENE COUNTY

Portrait of a Graduate

Greene County School System's Portrait of a Graduate represents a community-inspired vision for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that matter most for life beyond school. Our theory of action is that when learning experiences are intentionally designed to cultivate these competencies, students will engage more deeply in their education while developing the capacity to thrive in an evolving workforce and civic landscape. The Portrait serves as both a north star and a practical framework: guiding instructional decisions, aligning systems, and strengthening the connection between schools and the broader Greene County community. Ultimately, it reflects our collective belief that by clearly naming and prioritizing these outcomes, we expand access, opportunity, and future pathways for all Greene County graduates.



Why Portrait of a Graduate?

Establishes a Shared Language

The portrait aims to clarify the essential skills for students' long term success.

Aligns School Design with Community Needs

We recognize the civic and workforce demands of tomorrow are evolving. How we design learning should too.

Serves as a Compass for Teaching and Learning

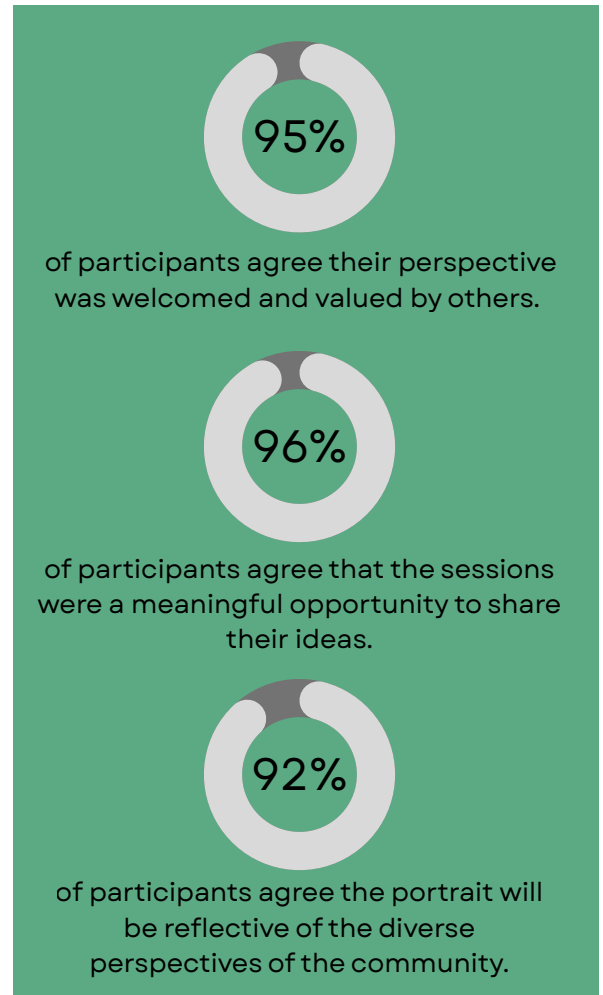
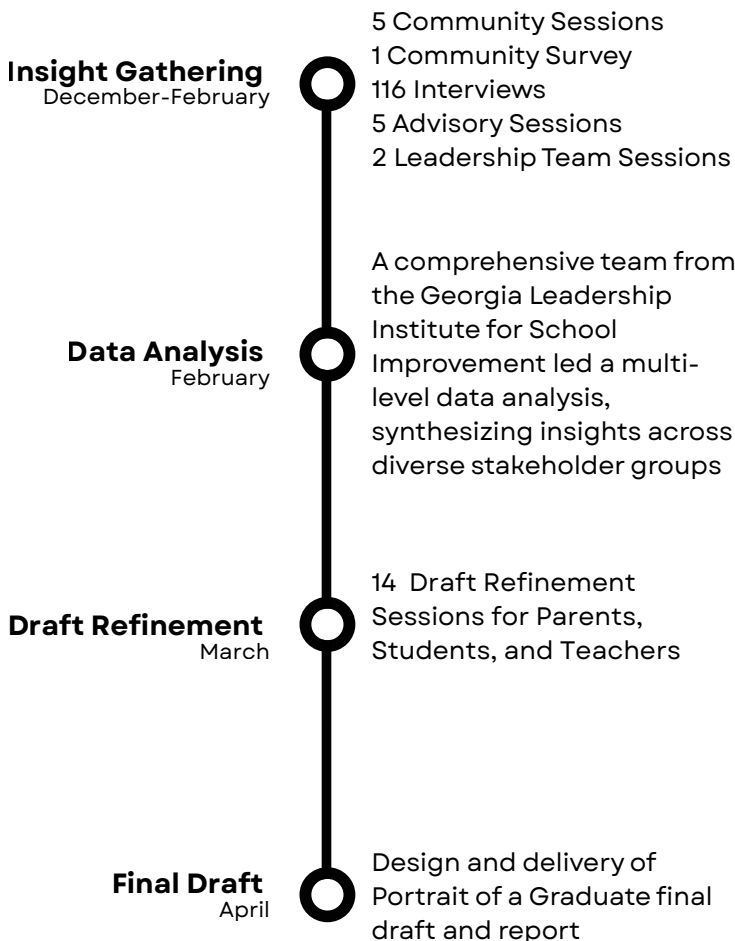
Competencies from the portrait are integrated into students' daily learning experiences. The document will also support district and school staff in choosing strategies and actions that advance the vision.

Our Process

In November 2025, Greene County School System embarked on a journey to define what Joyful, Meaningful, and Rigorous Learning looks like for every student and to translate that vision into a modern, student-centered, competency-based framework for teaching and learning. Their cabinet and board selected the Georgia Leadership Institute for School Improvement (GLISI) to partner with them on this endeavor. GLISI understands this work not as a series of meetings, but as a learning process: a structured, facilitated journey that builds shared meaning across stakeholders, and strengthens community trust.

GLISI's methodology was designed to ensure that these products emerge through authentic community engagement and disciplined sense-making, not apart from them.

- 1. Inclusive Design** – We build structures that invite diverse perspectives, ensuring those most affected by district decisions have a meaningful voice in shaping them.
- 2. Empathy and Inquiry** – We begin with questions, not answers, using structured reflection and dialogue to surface underlying needs and aspirations.
- 3. Co-Creation** – We design experiences where participants generate, test, and refine ideas together, building shared ownership of outcomes.
- 4. Reciprocity and Transparency** – We ensure visible progress and two-way communication throughout the process so stakeholders can see how their input shapes the plan.
- 5. Adaptive Implementation** – We help leaders move from static planning to living systems of learning, where data and reflection guide continuous improvement.



Through community sessions, advisory councils, survey feedback, 1:1 interviews, and refinement sessions, GLISI heard from 872 GCSS stakeholders about their experience of the system, aspirations for the future, and skills, knowledge, and dispositions they perceive as essential for student success in K-12 education and beyond.

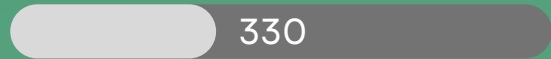
872
STUDENT, EDUCATOR,
COMMUNITY VOICES ENGAGED



COMMUNITY



EDUCATORS + STAFF



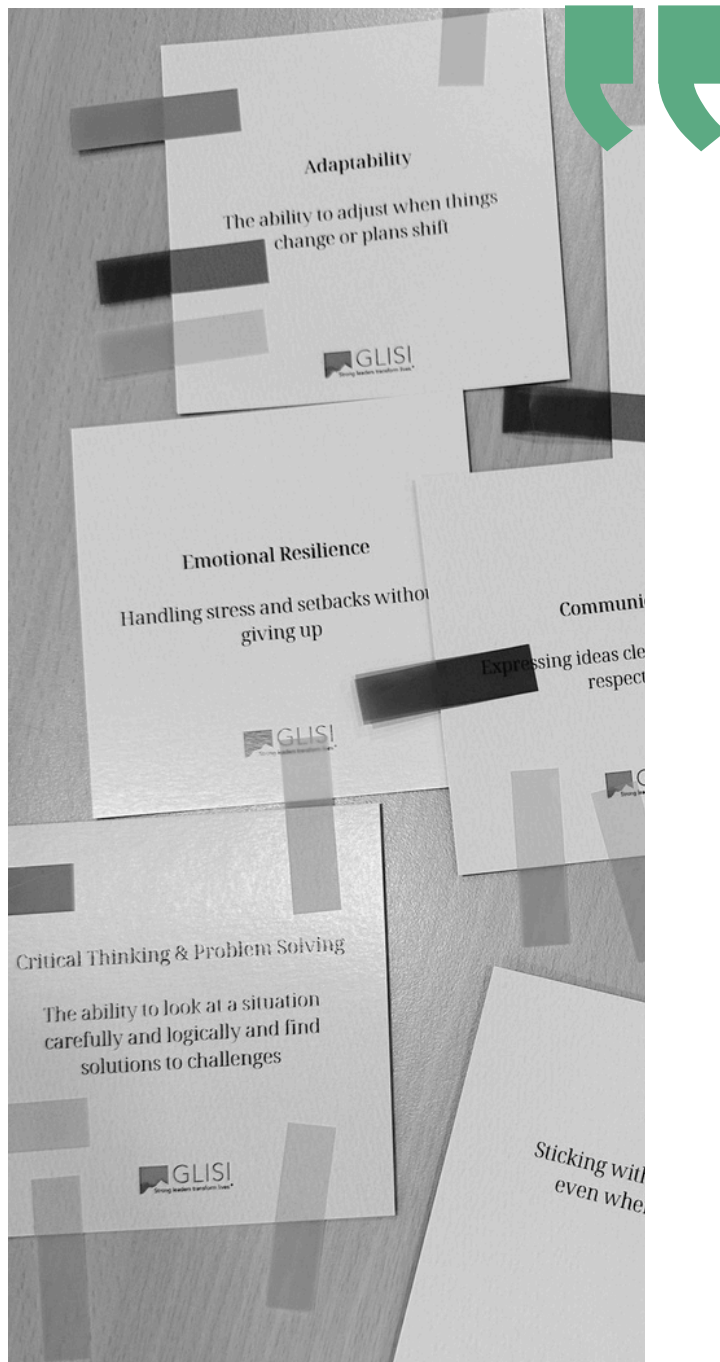
STUDENTS

TOP “ESSENTIAL AND IMPORTANT” SKILLS IDENTIFIED IN
COMMUNITY CONVERSATION SESSIONS
(frequency out of 12)

Communication	10
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	10
Responsibility and Integrity	10
Grit	10
Adaptability	9



Our Portrait Should Reflect...



....a focus on academics but also on life skills, character development, and civic responsibility.

....successful graduates are not defined solely by grades or test scores, but by their readiness for life beyond school.

....we are building responsible citizens who are developing career opportunities in a changing world.

....tools needed to enter the workforce or college with skills and knowledge required to thrive like compassion, respect, and willingness to grow.

....that our graduates are well-rounded people. They need to excel academically, develop strong social and life skills, and work in society as a great teammate.

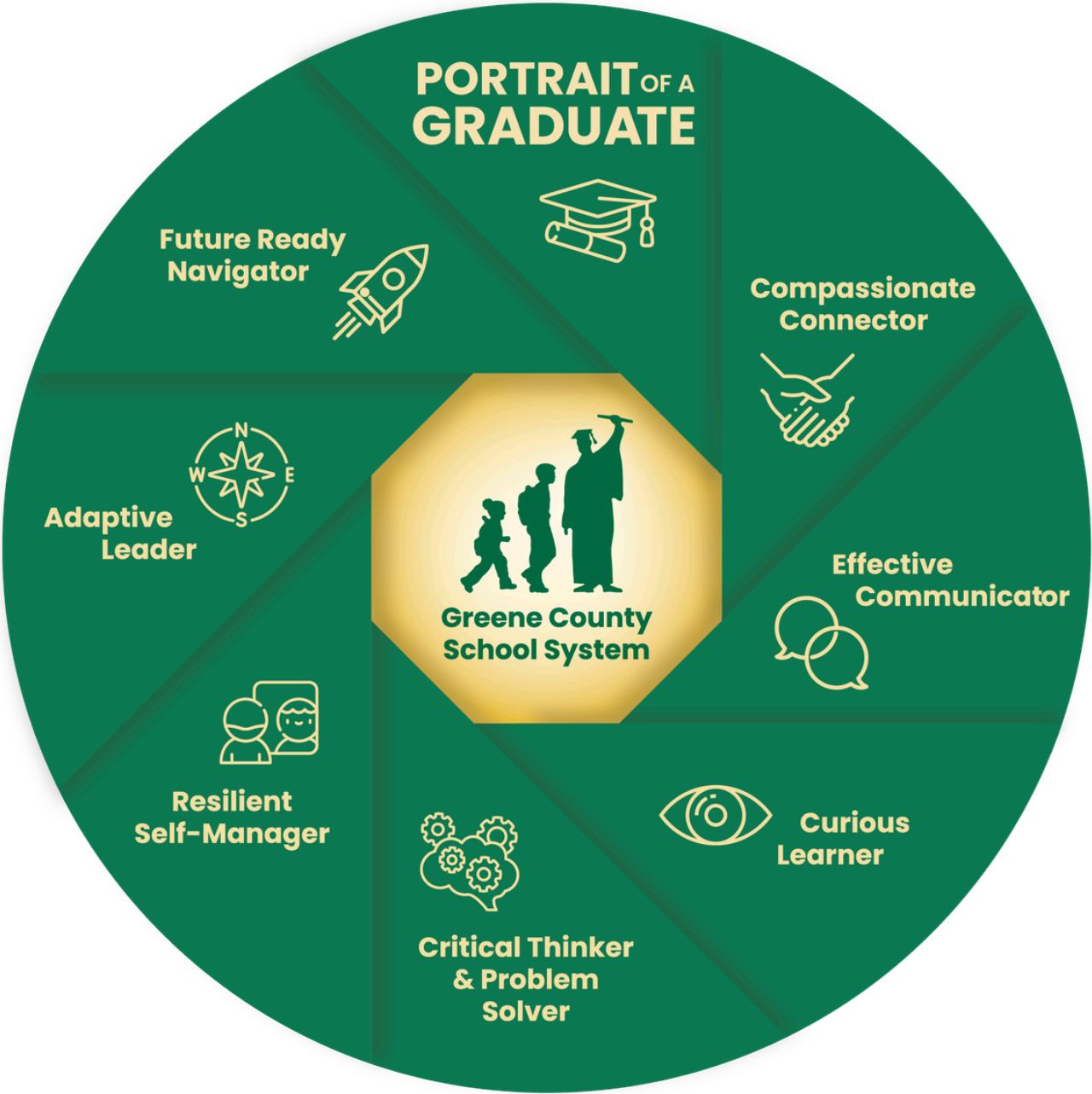
....resilient learners who demonstrate strong problem-solving skills, adaptability, and the ability to engage in constructive conversations with others who may hold different opinions, while being prepared for college, career, and active community engagement.

Respondent Quotes

Community Survey, January 2026

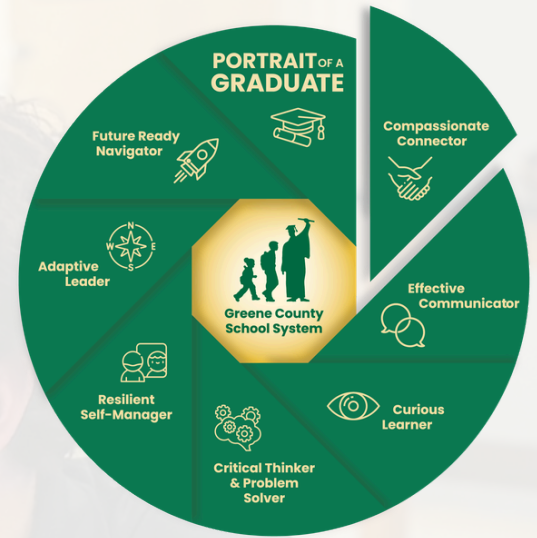


Greene County School System Portrait of a Graduate



Compassionate Connector

Builds community with empathy and integrity



Summary

Being a Compassionate Connector is grounded in stakeholders' emphasis on respect, collaboration, and interpersonal skills. Strong relationships are foundational to both personal and professional success. Families and community members highlighted the importance of students being respectful and able to work with people from diverse backgrounds. Students focused on the value of “reading the room” and cultivating a community within their classrooms, school, and larger communities. How students interact with others is as important as what they know.

A GCSS Compassionate Connector...

- Builds positive relationships with peers, adults, and community members across different backgrounds and experiences
- Demonstrates empathy and respect by valuing others' perspectives and responding with kindness and care
- Understands how their actions affect others and acts with integrity and responsibility

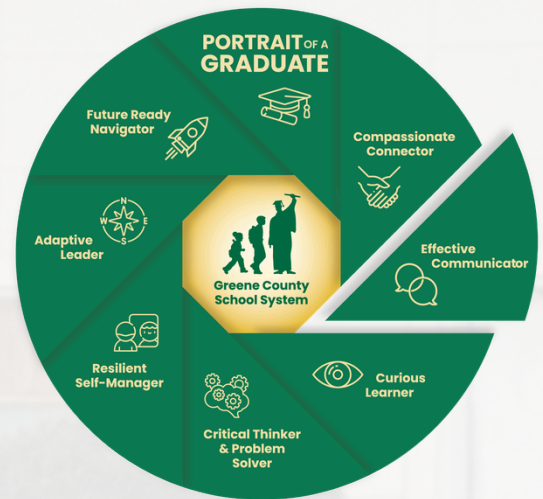


Considerations to measure progress in this competency

- Use collaboration rubrics across classrooms for students to reflect on their role in growing this skill and to give feedback
- Facilitate student reflection activities after community engagement or team-based opportunities
- Administer student surveys on belonging and relationship-building skills

Effective Communicator

Expresses ideas with clarity and purpose



Summary

The Effective Communicator competency reflects a consistent and strong message from all stakeholder groups: students must be able to clearly express their ideas, actively listen, and collaborate with others. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of students being able to adapt their communication for different audiences and contexts. Across surveys and conversations, communication was identified not just as an academic skill but as essential for workplace success, relationship building, and civic engagement.

A GCSS Effective Communicator...

- Communicates ideas with clarity and purpose through speaking, writing, and digital tools for different audiences and contexts
- Listens carefully and asks questions to better understand others' ideas and viewpoints
- Works with others to solve problems, find common ground, and strengthen relationships

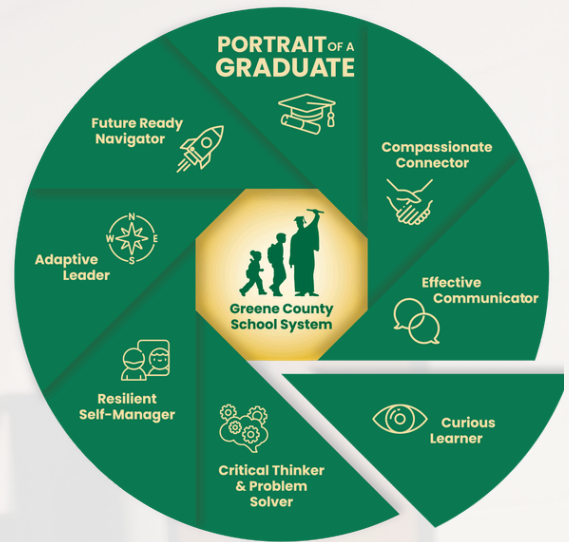


Considerations to measure progress in this competency

- Use presentation rubrics across grade levels
- Evaluate student progress using performance tasks requiring real-world communication (ex: exhibitions, debates, etc.)
- Implement structured collaborative learning protocols (e.g., group problem-solving, peer feedback)

Curious Learner

Explores ideas with curiosity and values continuous learning



Summary

The trait of curiosity was a highly emphasized trait, particularly among students and educators. Stakeholders focused on a desire for students to not only learn, but also to want to learn by asking big questions, exploring new ideas, and engaging deeply with content. This competency also reflects the importance of fostering a mindset of continuous learning that extends beyond the classroom and throughout life.

A GCSS Curious Learner...

- Approaches new ideas and experiences with enthusiasm and a questioning mind
- Asks “why” and “what if” questions to explore and investigate ideas more deeply
- Seeks out learning beyond the classroom through opportunities such as internships, work experiences, or advanced learning

Mia
Mauriello

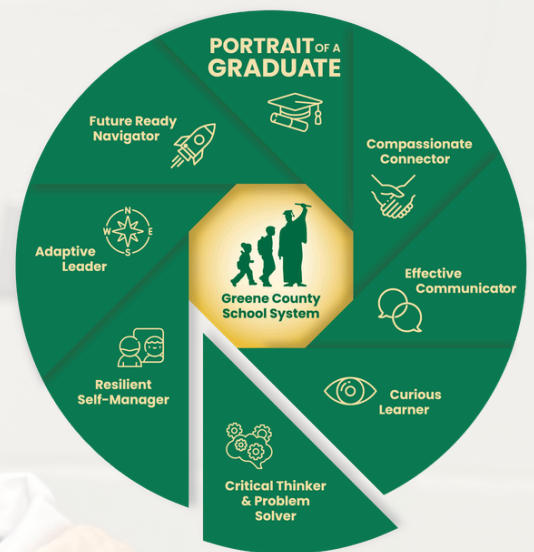


Considerations to measure progress in this competency

- Track student-generated questions during instruction
- Gather evidence with passion projects where students explore topics they care deeply about and incorporate learning across school disciplines and their lived experiences
- Administer surveys and analyze data to track the number of students seeking out and engaging in external learning opportunities

Critical Thinker & Problem Solver

Solves problems with strategy and innovation



Summary

Stakeholders across all groups expressed the need for students to think deeply, solve meaningful problems, and apply learning in real-world contexts. Rather than memorizing information, stakeholders emphasized the value of analysis, reasoning, and evaluating information from multiple sources. In a world that is certain to be ever-changing, students' ability to navigate complexity and make informed decisions with logic and creativity is important.

A GCSS Critical Thinker and Problem Solver...

- Analyzes information from multiple sources to determine accuracy, credibility, and relevance
- Develops solutions that are thoughtful, practical, and creative
- Connects knowledge from multiple subject areas to address complex challenges

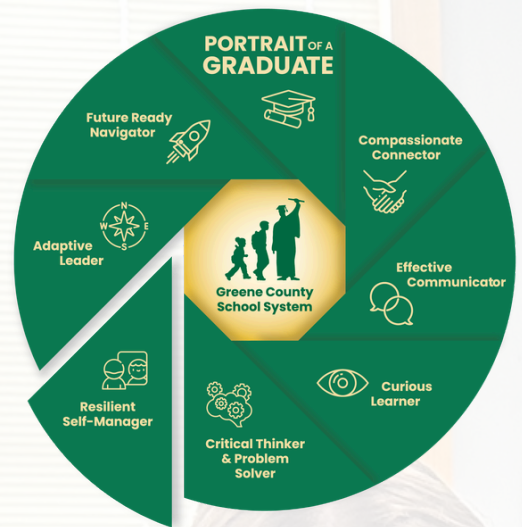


Considerations to measure progress in this competency

- Develop and deliver assessments that require students to synthesize information across content areas
- Assign performance-based tasks and project-based learning experiences
- Analyze student work using protocols such as Project Zero's Looking at Student Thinking Protocol

Resilient Self-Manager

Reflects, grows, and takes ownership



Summary

The Resilient Self-Manager competency reflects an emphasis on responsibility, perseverance, integrity, and independence. Community members highlighted the importance of students being able to manage themselves, set goals, and persist through challenges. Students and families honed in on the need for learners to reflect on their progress and advocate for support when needed. Success is not just an ability but about active habits, mindsets, and ownership of learning.

A GCSS Resilient Self-Manager...

- Sets personal and learning goals and tracks progress toward achieving them
- Reflects on what worked well and what didn't and uses their reflections as opportunities to grow
- Advocates for their needs and asks for help, feedback, or resources

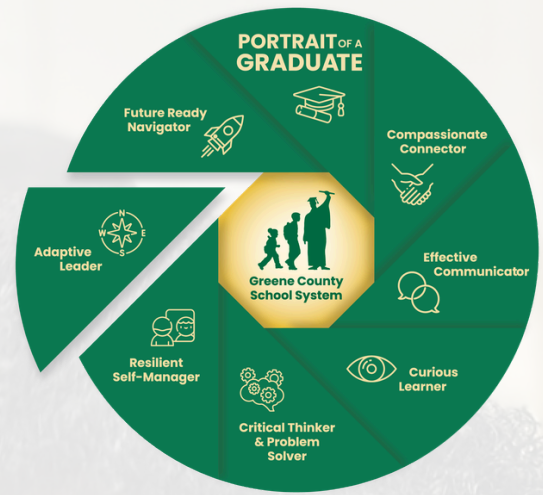


Considerations to measure progress in this competency

- Implement student-led conferences where students share progress toward goals and reflect on learning
- Develop classroom practices of regular goal setting and reflection cycles with learning journals
- Create rubrics for habits of success inclusive of self-advocacy behaviors

Adaptive Leader

Leads self and others through change



Summary

This competency reflects a vision of leadership as a mindset that includes resilience and the ability to guide others toward shared goals in a changing world. Stakeholders emphasized leadership as taking initiative, being accountable to others, and stepping up in both formal and informal ways. Students believe that the ability to pivot and navigate change and uncertainty is critical for their future success.

An GCSS Adaptive Leader...

- Responds to change, new information, and challenges with a solutions-oriented mindset
- Takes initiative and demonstrates a willingness to try new approaches
- Guides others through uncertainty with a commitment to achieving shared goals

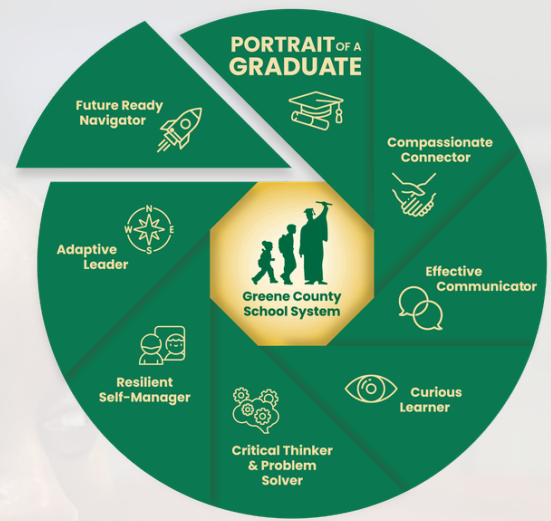


Considerations to measure progress in this competency

- Design observation tools for leadership behaviors (facilitating, influencing, organizing, etc.)
- Use rubrics for project-based learning experiences that include leadership components
- Facilitate student reflection activities after leadership opportunities in both formal and informal roles

Future Ready Navigator

Navigates future with skill and confidence



Summary

The Future Ready Navigator competency reflects strong agreement across stakeholders on preparing students for life beyond school. Educators and the community focused on career readiness and responsible use of technology, whereas students highlighted the critical value of financial literacy. All of these skills are in service to students' ability to navigate real-world systems. This competency brings together practical life skills with forward-thinking planning and ensuring students are equipped to pursue meaningful pathways aligned to their strengths and interests.

A GCSS Future Ready Navigator...

- Develops personal strengths, interests, and aspirations to pursue a meaningful pathway for life
- Uses digital and AI tools to learn and create while thinking critically about their impact and appropriate use
- Demonstrates financial, civic, and other life skills needed to navigate adulthood and contribute positively to their community



Considerations to measure progress in this competency

- Students craft and annually update post-secondary plans
- Track completion of real-world readiness tasks such as applications, resumes, internships, etc.
- Develop and distribute a rubric for students to reflect on digital literacy and responsible AI use

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

More than 870 GCSS stakeholders contributed their insights, both in person and via survey. Thank you to each individual who shared their aspirations and ideas to inform the GCSS Portrait of a Graduate.

Faith Castellano, M.Ed., Jennie Welch, Ph.D., Meca Mohammed, Ph.D., and Letishia Seabrook Jones, Ph.D. for community session and refinement session facilitation

Faith Castellano, M. Ed. and the GLISI Team for data analysis and sense making

Faith Castellano, M. Ed. for report writing and design, with edit support from Kasey Wood, M.Ed. and Jennie Welch, Ph.D.

CONTACT



3237 Satellite Blvd
Duluth GA 30096

www.glisi.org
@GLISI