

Dear Watershed Community,

Tomorrow evening at FAIR (Festival of Arts and Intellectual Reflection), our students will reflect on their learning and growth through presentations focused on aspects of what we call our “Portrait of a Graduate.” The early versions I’ve seen make me very excited about their work – it should be a great evening!

Our Portrait of a Graduate sits alongside our school mission – supporting and clarifying the essential skills, abilities, and character strengths we help students develop in their time at Watershed. Our mission is:

*To spark adventure and wonder, foster inquiry and community, and build the character and ability of students to take on the world’s greatest challenges.*

Our Portrait of a Graduate provides more detail about just what we mean when we say “build the character and ability...” The character strengths we focus on are curiosity, courage, creativity, emotional intelligence, and ownership. The abilities we focus on are research skills, communication skills, quantitative reasoning skills, craft and artistry, and leadership skills. (See below for more detailed descriptions of these abilities and character strengths.)

Watershed first developed a Portrait of a Graduate in 2015. Since the Portrait of a Graduate is intended to be a representation of the skills and strengths students need for their future, it is the kind of document that we should revisit from time to time. After all, the future our students are entering is ever evolving, and our understanding of learning and teaching is also advancing. So in 2020, a couple of students worked in a directed study with a couple of administrators to revise the portrait. We reviewed current research on:

- how the world is changing in the near future;
- what skills and character strengths are likely to be most important to address the challenges of the future our student will inhabit; and
- what correlates with success in college and beyond.

This process was a classic example of Watershed being both research-based and future-focused. We didn’t just sit around and decide what we think is important, we looked at the research. And we did so with a clear eye on our students’ future, not our past. As a bonus, we engaged a group of our students fully in the process!

Tomorrow night, students will present on how they are developing these strengths and abilities – the very strengths and abilities that will help them take on the world’s greatest challenges.

Thanks for reading.

Warmly,

Tim

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More detailed version of Character Strengths and Skills and Abilities:

## **Character Strengths**

### Curiosity

1. We start with questions.
2. We bring a sense of wonder and awe.
3. We actively explore new ideas.
4. We seek understanding.
5. We bring an open mind.
6. We have a passion for learning.
7. We have intellectual humility.

### Courage

1. We persevere through challenges.
2. We are resilient.
3. We are adaptable.
4. We are willing to try new things.
5. We are true to their own values, even when it's hard.

### Creativity

1. We can think divergently.
2. We are bold with ideas.
3. We are imaginative.
4. We are innovative.
5. We are original thinkers.
6. We are resourceful.

### Emotional Intelligence

1. We are empathetic.
2. We are grateful.
3. We show social intelligence.
4. We are self-aware.
5. We demonstrate self-regulation.

### Ownership

1. We demonstrate agency – in their lives and their learning
2. We take responsibility easily.
3. We demonstrate integrity.
4. We are positively engaged.
5. We take initiative.

## **Skills and abilities**

### Research Skills

1. Critical Thinking Skills
2. Systems Thinking Skills
3. Problem Solving Skills

### Communication Skills

1. Writing skills
2. Digital communication skills
3. Presentation skills
4. Conversation/discussion/debate/ argumentation skills
5. Listening skills
6. Reading skills

### Quantitative Reasoning Skills

1. Mathematical fluency
2. Data analysis/data literacy
3. Technological Skills
4. Information Fluency
5. Quantitative problem solving

### Craft and Artistry

1. Care/purpose/pride in work
2. Revision/iteration
3. Attention to detail
4. Beautiful, professional presentation of work

### Leadership Skills

1. Collaboration
2. Cultural Fluency
3. Confidence
4. Initiative
5. Decision-making skills
6. Tolerance for adversity and uncertainty
7. Mentorship skills
8. Expedition behavior – focused on group well-being