What is a Graduate Profile?

What would you say if your student asked:

**Why am I even here? What's the point of high school anyways?**

**You're in school so that you can get into college and get a good job.**

**Sometimes it just feels like I'm here because it's the law. I feel like I don't learn anything that actually matters.**

As a teacher, I'm always conflicted about how to answer this question.

Even in one school or community, there can be many answers to this student's question about the purpose of high school.

To find your passion!

To learn to collaborate with others!

To learn to solve complex problems in creative ways!

To learn foundational knowledge in diverse fields!

With so many ideas about what high school should prepare students to know and be able to do, how do we acknowledge these perspectives?

One way to answer these questions is to develop a graduate profile.

A graduate profile is a collection of capabilities or qualities that characterize the graduates of your high school.

A graduate profile helps answer...

What should graduates of my high school be able to do?

How will they view themselves?

What should they know or understand?

What are they ready to do?

What would make their community proud?
There are two main reasons we think you and your school should consider developing a graduate profile.

1. This is a chance to ask the entire community—from students, teachers, administrators, and school staff to parents, local business leaders and government officials—what they expect from high school graduates.

2. You should also consider how your school currently communicates its expectations for graduates, even if it’s not explicit.

A curriculum that builds up to end-of-the-year presentations of independent student projects can show that a school values creativity and initiative.

For example, spending time and funds on standardized test preparation might communicate that it’s a priority that students are good test-takers.

The benefit of this process is that once you have developed a graduate profile, it can serve as a touchstone for school innovation!

When schools try too many things to keep up with trends, it’s often unclear to staff, students and parents how the new initiatives are relevant.

Your graduate profile can help you focus improvement and innovation efforts by prompting the question, “How does what we’re proposing, or what we’ve already been doing, align with what we’ve prioritized in our profile?”

The graduate profile is a tool that will help you communicate what you think the purpose of high school is by communicating who you hope your students will become.

“What’s the point?” is a scary question, but it’s one that educators must ask regularly to keep school effective and relevant.