

RethinkEd | Together We Power Potential

From Vision to Practice: Preparing Students for Post-Secondary Success

Why Future-Ready Skills Matter

Problem->Outcome



The Problem

- Many students graduate without key life and career skills
- They don't see how school connects to the real world
- The world is becoming more complex and fast-paced
- There is no comprehensive curriculum to close the skills gap

The Outcome

- Students are often underprepared for life after high school
- Engagement and attendance is declining
- They struggle to adapt to change
- Educators are left to patch together inconsistent solutions on their own

Rethinking Readiness

- 85% of jobs that will exist in 2030 **haven't been invented yet** (Dell Technologies).
- Employers say **adaptability, communication,** and **problem-solving** are top missing skills (NACE, 2024).
- 60% of employers say **soft skills** are more important today than five years ago, yet many report hiring candidates with strong technical expertise who **struggle with communication, collaboration, and adaptability** (HR Dive, 2024).
- **Only 11%** of college students and **fewer than 30%** of Gen Z high schoolers say they feel "very prepared" for life after graduation (eCampus News, 2022, PR Newswire, 2024).

Why Mindset Matters

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Deficit Mindset

- Blames: assumes students lack will or motivation
- Emphasizes compliance
- Tells students they're not "college material" or "won't get a good job"
- Believes readiness is something students have or don't

Responsive Mindset

- Builds: sees underperformance as a signal of unmet needs, skill gaps, or contextual barriers
- Emphasizes capacity building and relevance
- Believes that students can be taught the skills they need no matter the situation
- Readiness is something schools intentionally cultivate

How can we design more opportunities for students to practice readiness skills?

Why Mindset Matters

Future-ready skills are the pathway to success for all students.

- Explicit teaching of self-management, metacognition, and communication skills **improves persistence and closes post-secondary gaps,** especially for disadvantaged learners. (EEF 2018)
- By teaching these habits *now*, students who are struggling gain the exact skills they'll need to **stay enrolled, stay employed, and stay engaged** after graduation.

Reflect & Share

Think of a student who might be labeled as ‘underachieving’. Consider what readiness skills they might need more opportunity to practice *(time management, adaptability, listening to identify key information, etc.).*

Share your responses in the chat!

Defining The Skills Students Need for Post-Secondary Success

Defining "Future-Ready"

- 9 of the top 10 skills for employability are **transferable skills**, not technical skills. (World Economic Forum 2023)
- Competencies like **critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication** are strongly linked to how ready students feel for workplace demands and lifelong learning *(Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Ahmad et al., 2022).*
- These skills **bridge the gap** between academic content and real-life application *(Iowa Department of Education, 2024)*
- 65% of employers rate **digital communication and data literacy** as essential entry-level skills. *Pew Research Center (2023)*
- Future-ready learners combine knowledge, skills, and values to **shape** their world, not just respond to it. (OECD 2030)

5 Key Domains

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Digital Literacy

Using technology responsibly and creatively. Students learn not only how to navigate digital tools including Artificial Intelligence (AI) but also how to evaluate online information, practice safe habits, and build responsible habits.

Critical Thinking and Innovation

Thinking strategically, solving problems, and taking creative risks. These skills help students evaluate information, explore different solutions, and adapt when challenges arise.



Personal and Social Responsibility

Understanding context and appreciating different perspectives. Students will learn how to reflect on their own actions and make responsible choices to create stronger communities inside and outside of school.

Effective Communication and Collaboration

Building relationships and leading with purpose. Students practice expressing ideas clearly and working toward shared goals to gain the skills that directly impact future education, careers, and relationships.

Adaptability and Lifelong Learning

Growing curiosity and learning independently. Students learn how to be resilient and thrive in a rapidly changing world by embracing change, learning from setbacks, and seeking out new knowledge.

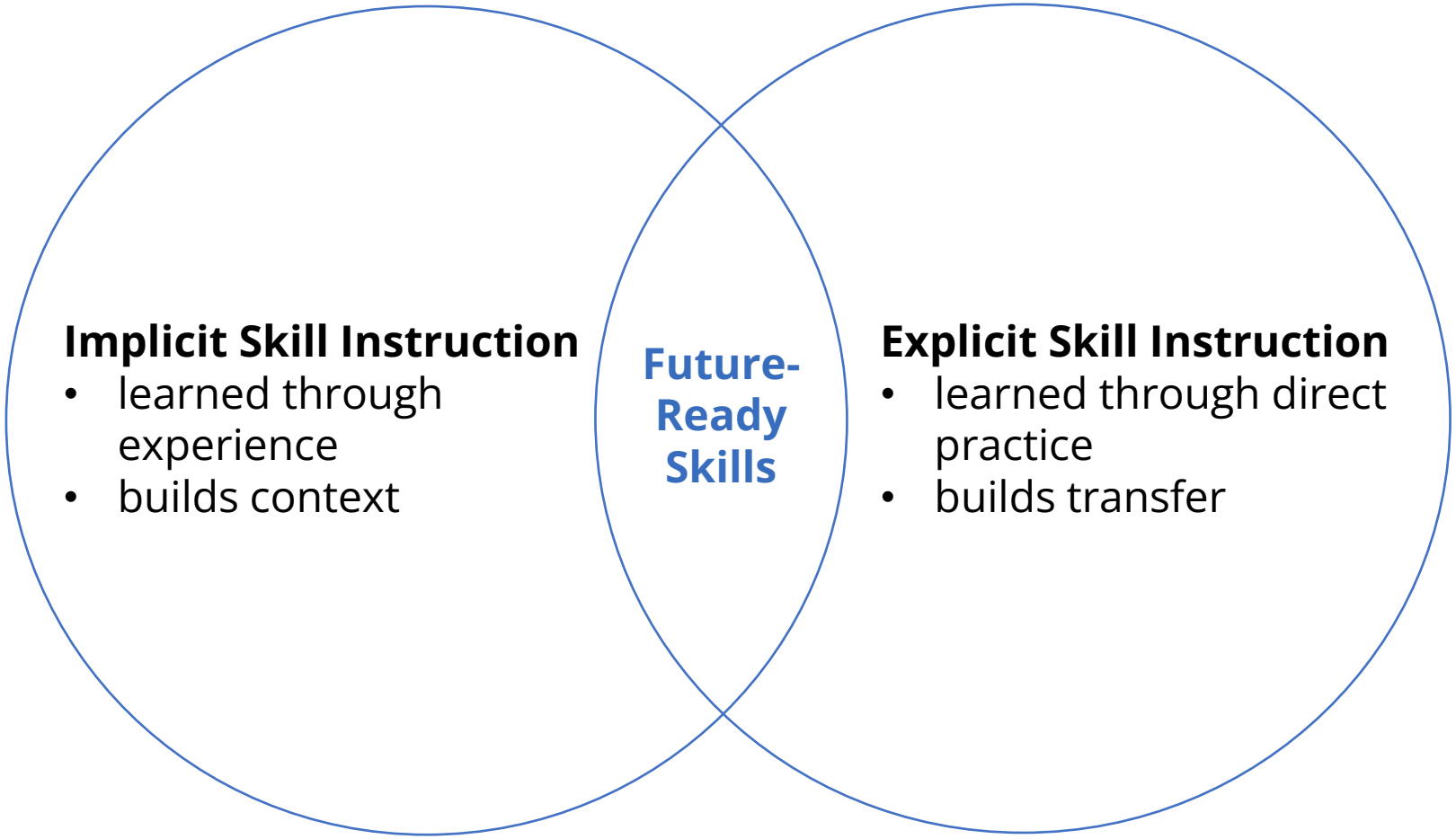
Poll

Which domain feels like it **needs the most attention** in your program?

- Adaptability & Lifelong Learning
- Critical Thinking & Innovation
- Effective Communication & Collaboration
- Personal & Social Responsibility
- Digital Literacy

Building Future-Ready Skills: Classroom Level

Implicit & Explicit Skill Building



Adaptability & Lifelong Learning

Skills: curiosity, flexibility, connecting knowledge & experience, self-directed learning

Implicit	Explicit
• Give students authentic choices. *(curiosity)* • Encourage students to try a new approach. *(flexibility)* • Make space for students to draw on prior experiences. *(connecting knowledge & experience)* • Provide students with project options and have them set independent goals. *(self-directed learning)*	• Have students practice identify quality questions. *(curiosity)* • Model cognitive flexibility: *"My plan didn't work, so I'm trying a different strategy."* *(flexibility)* • Teach metacognitive routines. *(connecting knowledge & experiences)* • Teach a goal setting process/framework. *(self-directed learning)*

Future You **Planning**

Complete a SWOT Analysis for a post-secondary goal.

My Goal:

Strengths: What personal strengths will help you?	**Weaknesses:** What challenges or gaps might make this goal harder?
Opportunities: What resources or support could help you?	**Threats:** What external factors could make it harder to reach your goal?

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Use your SWOT analysis to create 3–4 *If... Then...* statements that show how you'll build on your strengths and opportunities and plan for any weaknesses or threats.

If I don't get the financial aid I need for college, then I will get a part time job using my coaching skills.

If I can intern at a construction company, then I'll put off taking classes until next semester.

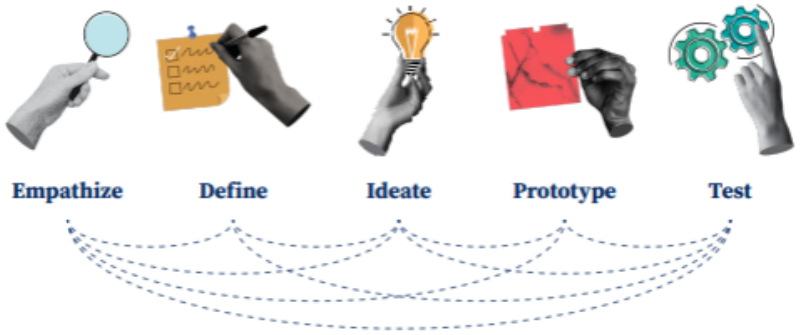
Critical Thinking & Innovation

Skills: reasoning, thinking strategically, seeking solutions, creative risk-taking

Implicit	Explicit
• Ask students to choose between two strong options. *(reasoning)* • Design projects where students engage in trial and error to determine what works best. *(thinking strategically)* • Pose authentic problems with multiple answers. *(seeking solutions)* • Shout out innovative approaches or outcomes even when they're imperfect. *(creative risk-taking)*	• Model your own reasoning: *"Here's why I think this evidence fits the claim"*. *(reasoning)* • Have students compare strategies after completing a task. *(thinking strategically)* • Teach a structured problem-solving framework. *(seeking solutions)* • Use design-thinking frameworks that reward innovation and iteration.*(creative risk-taking)*

Design Thinking **Process**

design thinking process: a problem-solving approach that focuses on understanding users' needs, brainstorming creative solutions, and testing ideas



Design thinking is a flexible process. You might complete multiple stages at the same time or find that a stage leads you to new information, problems, or solutions to explore. Don't be afraid to break out of the mold!

Empathize

Try to understand the needs of the people affected and gather information about their experiences and challenges.

Ask yourself: *Who are the people affected, and how can I learn about their specific needs?*

Tip: Conduct interviews, surveys, or think tanks to gather information.

Define

Define the problem clearly.

Ask yourself: *What specific problem are we solving, and who are we solving it for?*

Tip: Define how the problem impacts the people affected, using what you know.

Ideate

Brainstorm as many possible solutions as you can.

Ask yourself: *What are some ways we can solve this problem?*

Tip: At this stage, there are no bad ideas! Let your imagination run wild

Prototype

Choose a solution you think might work and create a simple version of your solution.

Ask yourself: *What do we want the solution to look like, and how can we make a simple version to test?*

Tip: Prototypes should be quick and inexpensive, as you are still experimenting with solutions!

Test

Test your prototype with real users, gather feedback, and make changes based on what works and what doesn't.

Ask yourself: *What worked well, and what needs improvement?*

Tip: This may be the last stage of the process, but design thinking is non-linear. Be open to the likelihood that testing will lead you to a new problem or solution.

Effective Communication & Collaboration

Skills: building collaborative relationships, articulating thoughts & ideas, listening, leading

Implicit	Explicit
• Regularly use collaborative work where students share ideas and divide responsibilities. *(building collaborative relationships)* • Provide multiple ways for students to share opinions or explain reasoning. *(articulating thoughts & ideas)* • Make respectful turn-taking and attention valued classroom norms. *(listening)* • Create structures where student voice informs how learning happens. *(leading)*	• Encourage intentional reflection after group tasks: *"What behaviors helped your group collaborate well?"*. *(building collaborative relationships)* • Provide sentence stems and feedback rubrics. *(articulating thoughts & ideas)* • Teach active listening strategies. *(listening)* • Model decision-making transparency*: "Here's how I made this call"*. *(leading)*



Personal & Social Responsibility

Skills: analyzing context, understanding perspectives, identify role & impact, self-accountability

Implicit	Explicit
• Encourage students to interpret content by examining multiple sources. *(analyzing context)* • Expose students to different viewpoints through class discussions and text choices. *(understanding perspectives)* • Highlight how individual actions contribute to group outcomes. *(identify role & impact)* • Have feedback conversations with students that emphasize effort and ownership. *(self-accountability)*	• Teach questions like "What factors shape this situation? What assumptions might I hold? *(analyzing context)* • Provide students with language that supports civil discourse and curiosity. *(understanding perspectives)* • Use reflection prompts: *"What difference did my contribution make?". (identify role & impact)* • Teach self-monitoring routines like progress trackers, personal reflection logs, etc. *(self-accountability)*

Your town is considering banning single-use plastic bags. Some shop owners say it will hurt business and environmental groups say it's essential for protecting wildlife.

Whose perspectives could you seek out to learn more? Whose voices are missing?

How can you find perspectives with established knowledge, direct experience, and balance?

You've noticed a strange smell in one wing of the school. A custodian says it's from cleaning chemicals and a teacher says it might be mold.

Whose perspectives could you seek out to learn more? Whose voices are missing?

How can you find perspectives with established knowledge, direct experience, and balance?

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Digital Literacy

Skills: social media literacy, digital wellness, digital creativity, digital citizenship

Implicit	Explicit
• Discuss credibility informally when students share digital content. *(social media literacy)* • Informally discuss online balance and healthy digital habits. *(digital wellness)* • Encourage and highlight creative use of technology in assignments. *(digital creativity)* • Develop class norms around in-class tech use. *(digital citizenship)*	• Have students compare how the same topic or event is represented on different platforms. *(social media literacy)* • Discuss attention and focus as academic skills: *"What helps you stay focused when using tech?". (digital wellness)* • Discuss ethical digital creation. *(digital creativity)* • Connect with classrooms in other regions through virtual exchanges. *(digital citizenship)*

Responsible Uses of AI

Check out these strategies to help you make informed and responsible choices when using AI.

Figure Out Your Purpose

Determine your goal and what you want to accomplish when using AI. Ask yourself, *What's my goal? How can AI help me reach it?*

Ex. *I want to use AI to help me organize my notes.*

Let AI Assist, Not Take Over

Use AI for support but avoid allowing it to do all the work for you. AI can't replace critical thinking and creativity.

Ex. Use AI to check your grammar and spelling after writing your own work.

Respect AI's Limitations

AI isn't perfect – it can make mistakes, be biased, or give outdated or misleading information. Always fact-check and think critically.

Ex. Check multiple sources before trusting AI-generated information.

Be Ethical and Transparent

Be real about how and when you use AI.

Ex. Let your teacher know if you used AI to help with data analysis.

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Reflect & Share

What are some ways that you implicitly or explicitly teach future-ready skills in your class or school?

Share your responses in the chat!

Building Future-Ready Skills: Whole School & District Level

Leaders Can…

Align Vision & Practice

- Connect district or school **“Portrait of a Graduate”** competencies to classroom instruction and assessment.
- Make future-ready skills **visible** in learning goals, rubrics, and walkthrough tools.

Empower & Equip Educators

- Provide PD on embedding and explicitly teaching **transferable skills.**
- Highlight teacher examples that show **learning connected to life** beyond school. Put these people in positions of de-facto leadership (if they're willing).

Leaders Can…

Create Structures That Support Skill Development

- **Build in time** for teachers to establish meaningful structures for reflection, collaboration, and project-based learning.
- Prioritize **cross-disciplinary planning** so skills are reinforced and ultimately transferred across content areas.

Model Lifelong Learning as a Leadership Team

- **Share your own** learning goals, feedback cycles, and moments of adaptation.
- **Normalize experimentation and reflection** at the leadership level.

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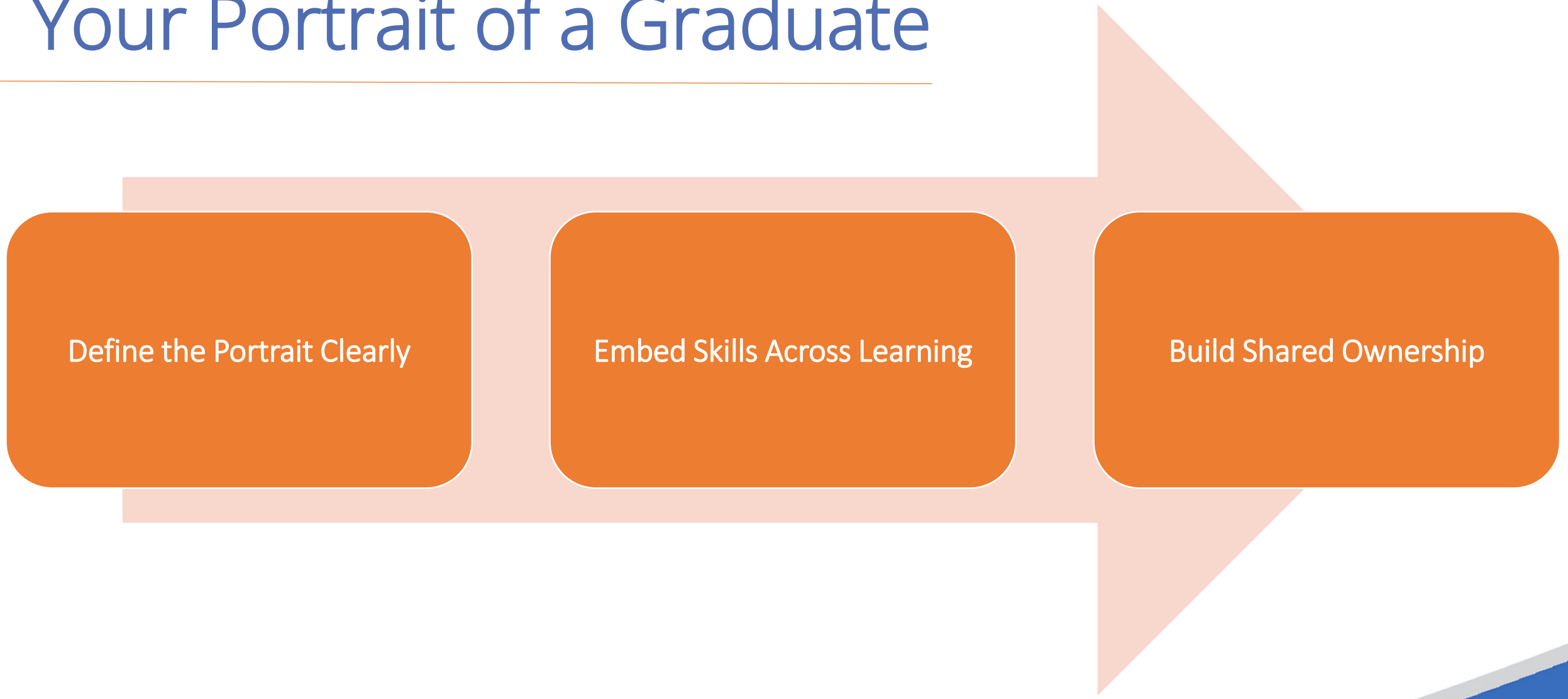
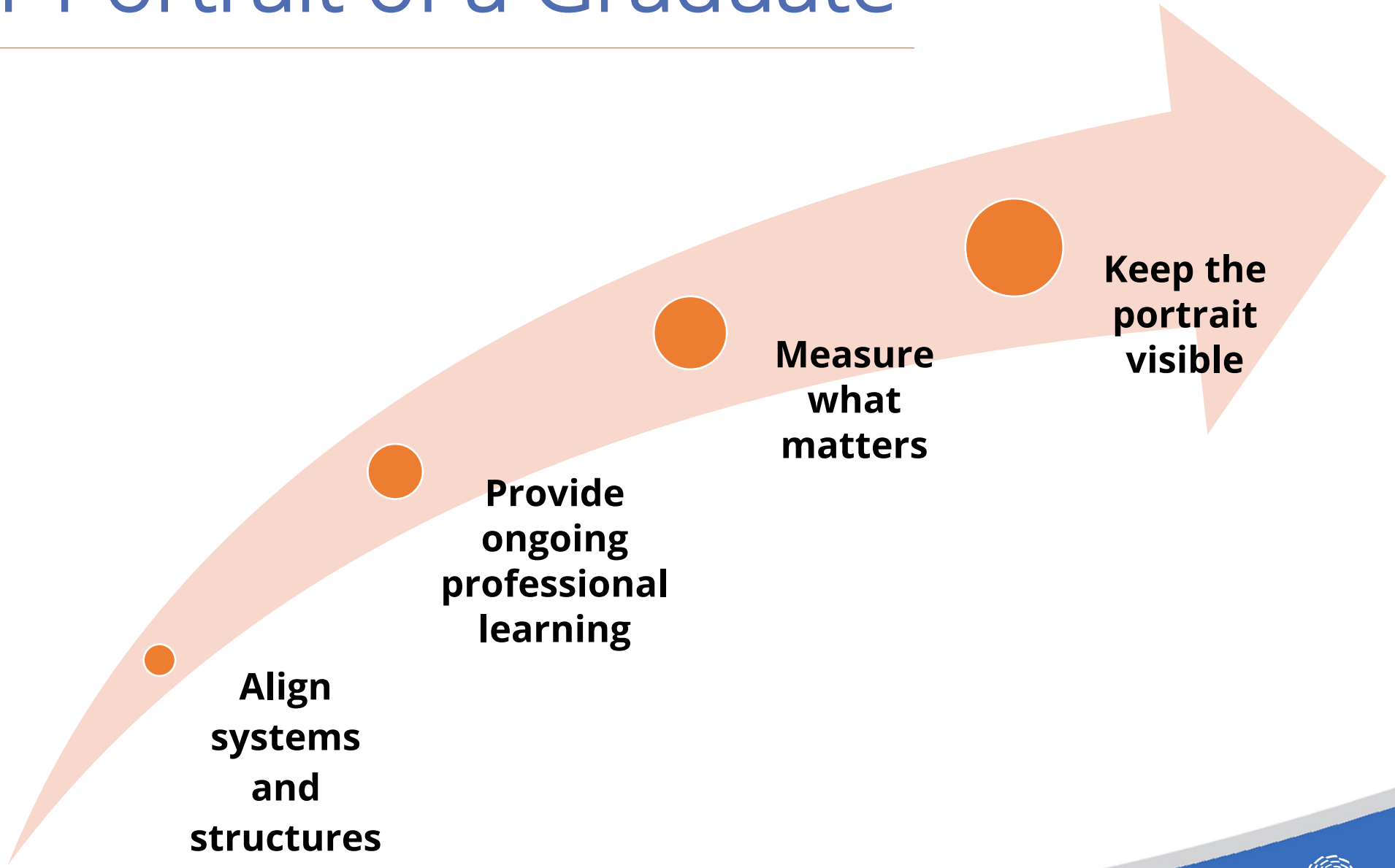
Portrait of a Graduate

Your Portrait of a Graduate



Your Portrait of a Graduate



Why RethinkEd

Ask us about new product launches:

LifeEd and NavigatED

1

MTSS

Streamline systems, simplify processes, and increase capacity to provide data-driven academic, behavioral, and social-emotional interventions that facilitate measurable student success.

2

Behavior

Promote positive behaviors, decrease behaviors that hinder learning, and maximize student and educator success in the classroom with a holistic and data-driven approach.

3

Special Education

Implement innovative, defensible, and evidence-based programs that focus on curriculum interventions targeting academic skills, life skills, social skills, and transitional/vocational skills.

4

Wellness

Promote social, emotional and mental well-being, connectedness and overall success by focusing on skills development and awareness for the entire school community.

Explore More: Access, Learn, and Engage

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   Driving Results Through Differentiation: MTSS and Vizzle

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Q&A Session



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