



Nevada **Future of Learning** Network

CASE STUDY

White Pine County School District

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What is your Design Challenge?

Our design challenge through the year has been to bring our Portrait of a Leader from draft form to a living, student- and community-facing north star for our district. Our “how might we” question focused on imagining how to bring this to pass while amplifying student voice and community perspective, recognizing that our internal bandwidth was and is exhausted with the demands of what is already on everyone’s plates.

[Board of Trustees Revised Framework Spring 2023](#)
[Draft Portrait of a Leader August 2023](#)

What did you do?

Our District Leadership Team analyzed and examined existing protocols, documents, expectations, and policy and articulated our draft Portrait. The superintendent presented the draft to all staff and trustees in August of 2023. District partner Batelle for Kids integrated the draft into a workshop with staff and community in August of 2023. The District Leadership Team workshopped the draft in the fall of 2023. District partner NCEE workshopped the draft with a group of students in the spring of 2023 and again separately with the District Leadership Team in the spring of 2023. This summer, NCEE will workshop the draft again with the community. We will begin exploring competency language, policy implications, and instructional shifts in August of 2024.

[Superintendent’s Presentation to All Staff August 2023](#)
[Community Barbecue and Celebration of Leadership August 2023](#)
[Workshop Sessions with Leadership Team, Staff, and Students](#)

What was the biggest surprise/barrier in implementation? What was the impact?

At the end of 2022-2023, as our draft Portrait was being crafted, we invited students in grades 4-8 to engage in a leadership, research, and writing learning experience. We were in the process of advocating with legislators for funding to replace our 1909 and 1913 campuses. Students enthusiastically responded, and their response gave us confidence that we were on the right track with amplifying leadership development as the overarching focus of our system. The impact was that students put forth a great deal of work, produced rigorous and scholarly work, and refined their leadership capacity as they testified in front of the Senate Finance Committee during public comment. Their remarks pressured the Committee to schedule a hearing for our bill. While the bill did not advance out of Committee, these students truly painted a portrait of excellence in leadership. They emphatically and persuasively argued for the need. They were able to justify their reasoning. And they conducted themselves with poise and composure. Teachers worked to support their students in the research and writing process. Students learned firsthand what it looks and feels like to participate in government.

[Student Work Samples](#)
[Pictures](#)

What was the greatest success? How did this success impact young people or how might it impact young people on your campus? What are their perceptions?

One success was the feedback we received from students in our student workshop. Another was the organic work that one Freshman Achievement class did, facilitated by their Peer Leaders and teacher, to study and internalize the domains of our Portrait and connect those to their current realities and future aspirations. A third success was the student-led conferences in place of traditional conferences.

[Freshman Achievement/Peer Leaders discuss their work on our Portrait](#)
[Folder of WPHS Portrait of a Leader Discussions with Students](#)

It is important to note that the inclusion in our draft of competencies like “Display gratitude,” “Think win-win,” “Seek first to understand,” “Show empathy with action,” and “Be honest and kind” have had a profound impact in schools’ and the community’s processing of tragedies during the 2023-2024 school year. In the space of about six months, we had four student or former student deaths, four parent deaths, and other life-altering events. The entire community was processing through trauma. The draft Portrait and Board Framework emphasizes four Theories of Action, and all four work synergistically. But three of the four (Building leadership capacity, Partnering with community and families, and Investing in student and staff well-being) really have empowered stakeholders, and students in particular, to make a positive impact even in challenging circumstances. High school students participated in a community-wide committee to plan these events. And students at large engaged in several projects to exert their leadership in ways that partnered with the community and families and invested in well-being, including a walk for hope, a mural design project, and a togetherness and belonging event.

[Walk for Hope](#)

[Student-Generated Messages of Hope](#)
[School Murals](#)
[Ribbon Cutting for Community Mural](#)
[Togetherness and Belonging Event](#)
[Togetherness and Belonging Photos](#)

What's next? How does your team plan to evolve this work? What are the most significant pieces of learning you see impacting adult work and young people's experiences? What school level, district level, state level policy may need to be addressed?

Our immediate next steps include workshopping our Portrait with a wide audience of community members in mid-June, which NCEE will facilitate. We will host the Pilot Implementation Kickoff with Knowledge Works and EdXtraordinary in Ely in late July. NCEE will be back to help us refine our competencies in mid-August. We are working with our labor organizations to develop stipends for educators who want to deeply engage with and lead this work. We will work with NCEE through the 2024-2025 school year to develop policy changes and instructional shifts. We have several of the pieces in place already, including portfolio assessment models, standards-based learning, and an emphasis from the top on rejecting singular measures (like standardized tests) as the sole way to quantify learning. Next steps include scaling these successes and, in particular, further refining the format of student-led conferences to explicitly focus on the five domains and corresponding competencies in our Portrait, developing additional tools and rubrics for teachers to use, and continuing to communicate and engage with stakeholders to build support and momentum for our more meaningful, holistic, and authentic vision of learning. #morethanjustascore

[NASS's Accountability Platform](#)
[NASS's Accountability Presentation to the Interim Education Committee](#)
[White Pine's Presentation to the IFC Education Accountability Subcommittee](#)
[Letter to Stakeholders for June and August Workshops](#)

Research + Resources that inspired and informed our thinking

[Superintendent Young's Dissertation Literature Review on Educational Reform](#)
[NCEE Reimagine Assessment](#)
[Batelle for Kids Science of Hope](#)