

## Portfolio and Capstone Guidebook

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 Capstone Work Group, January 2015

The information for the capstone project was created by the Graduation Guidelines Capstone Work Group. For a list of the members of the work group or for a copy of the [Capstone and Portfolio Guidebook](#), click [here](#).

### Definitions and Alignment with Graduation Guidelines

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### Capstones

Capstones are culminating exhibitions of a project, performance, or structured experience that demonstrates learning of pre-determined outcomes. Patricia J. Kannapel, a Research Consultant at the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center at Edvantia, lists a variety of capstone experiences: portfolio of best work; curriculum-based, research project; set of experiments organized around a central problem; community service project or service learning activity;<sup>1</sup>

The table below defines and details how these different capstone experiences align with *Colorado’s High School Graduation Guidelines*.

Type	Description	Alignment with Guideline Guidelines
<b>Portfolio Defense</b>	Portfolio of best work that displays skills and proficiency in identified content area(s).	Students may demonstrate 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills and/or competency in English, math, science and/or social studies, as well as 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills through Capstones.
<b>Research Exhibition</b>	Findings of a curriculum-based, research-project.	
<b>Experiment</b>	Findings of a mathematical or scientific experiment.	Students may demonstrate competency in math or science through Capstones.
<b>Service Learning</b>	Demonstration of learning experienced through service to the community.	Local district high school graduation requirements include student demonstrations of 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills in addition to the attainment of the minimum academic competencies. The skills include critical thinking and reasoning, information literacy, collaboration, self-direction, and invention.
<b>Event Coordination</b>	Display of learning experienced through community event coordination.	

Note: these are examples only. Districts are not limited to only these capstone options.

<sup>1</sup> Kannapel, Patricia (2012). High School Capstone Courses: A Review of the Literature. Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center at Edvantia. Charleston, WV.

## Portfolios

A portfolio is a purposeful collection of students’ individual work that exhibit their efforts, progress and achievements over time against a set of clearly defined outcomes. Charlotte Danielson and Leslye Abrutyn identify different types of portfolios. These classifications illustrate how various portfolios can address unique purposes. These include but are not limited to: Working, Assessment, Employment, and College Admission.<sup>2</sup> Each type of portfolio can be used to fulfill different requirements of the *Colorado’s High School Graduation Guidelines*.

The table below details the alignment between different portfolio types and the *Colorado High School Graduation Guidelines*.

Type	Description	Alignment with Guideline Guidelines
<b>Working</b>	An intentional collection of student “work-in progress” guided by learning objectives. The working portfolio complements the assessment portfolio.	A working portfolio is a <i>tool</i> for students to collect work that demonstrates 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills, and/or competency in English, mathematics, science and/or social studies. Further, because students can receive formative feedback on their work and have the opportunity to reflect and revise, the working portfolio aligns with the guidelines by allowing students multiple, equally rigorous, and valued ways to demonstrate competency of the knowledge and skills necessary for postsecondary education and meaningful careers. A working portfolio may also be used as a foundational resource for a capstone presentation.
<b>Assessment</b>	Documents <b>evidence</b> of disciplinary content knowledge and/or students’ skills.	An assessment portfolio is evaluated as a collection of evidence that demonstrates 21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills and/or competency in English, mathematics, science and/or social studies. An assessment portfolio may be used as a resource for a capstone presentation.
<b>Employment</b>	Contains a purposeful collection of evidence that demonstrates workforce readiness, including evidence of problem solving, adaptability and collaborative work skills.	Local district high school graduation requirements include successful completion of the Individual Career and Academic Plan, known as the ICAP, which include elements of both employment and college admission portfolios. Required by state statute for every ninth through twelfth grade student (or in the years required for a student to graduate), the ICAP is designed to assist a student and his or her parent or legal guardian in exploring the postsecondary career and educational opportunities available to the student, aligning course work and curriculum, applying to postsecondary education institutions, securing financial aid, and ultimately entering the workforce.
<b>College Admission</b>	Contains purposeful samples of student work for college admission. Contents are customized to meet the requests of universities, and should include best work.	

<sup>2</sup> Danielson, C. & Abrutyn, L. (1997). *An Introduction to Using Portfolios in the Classroom*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA.

The type of portfolio that is employed is dependent on school and/or district priorities and objectives. For example, if student demonstration of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and/or competency in English, mathematics, science and/or social studies were the desired outcome, then a combination working/assessment portfolio would be most appropriate. If exploring the postsecondary career and educational opportunities were a local priority, then a modified, combination employment/college portfolio would work well.

## Capstone and Portfolios Employed Together

Although portfolios and capstones can be used independently of each other, student learning is maximized when they are employed in unison. Take for example the assessment portfolio and defense. A student’s exemplar work is displayed in the assessment portfolio and then presented for evaluation during the portfolio defense. The defense usually occurs in a student’s senior year and serves as a summative assessment of postsecondary and workforce readiness. However, the contents of the portfolio are created and collected throughout the students’ high school experience and benchmark exhibitions are common in the sophomore or junior year. Discipline-specific portfolios and capstones lend themselves to capstone courses. See *Promising Practices* for an example of the content and performance expectations for an English capstone course.

This table defines frequently used terms and abbreviations.

Term	Definition
<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century skills</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> Century skills include critical thinking and reasoning, information literacy, collaboration, self-direction, and invention.
<b>Assessment</b>	Process to measure performance against a set of clearly defined outcomes.
<b>Capstone</b>	The culminating exhibition of a project, performance, or structured experiences that demonstrates learning of pre-determined outcomes.
<b>Competency</b>	Demonstrated application and transfer of knowledge and skills across unique settings according to established desired outcomes.
<b>Formative Assessment</b>	Continuous review and feedback regarding progress towards achieving a set of clearly defined outcomes.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Review of the effectiveness of a program.
<b>Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP)</b>	The Individual Career and Academic Plan assists a student and his or her parent or legal guardian in exploring the postsecondary career and educational opportunities available to the student, by aligning course work and curriculum, applying to postsecondary education institutions, securing financial aid, and ultimately entering the workforce.
<b>Portfolio</b>	A purposeful collection of student’s individual work that exhibit his or her efforts, progress and/or achievements over time, and against a set of clearly defined outcomes.
<b>Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness</b>	The knowledge, skills, and behaviors essential for high school graduates to be prepared to enter college and the workforce and compete in the global economy including content knowledge, learning and behavior skills.
<b>Service-learning</b>	Service-learning is an evidence-based teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful service with youth leadership, academic instruction, and guided reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic and personal responsibility, and strengthen communities.
<b>Summative Assessment</b>	Final measure of performance against a set of clearly defined outcomes.