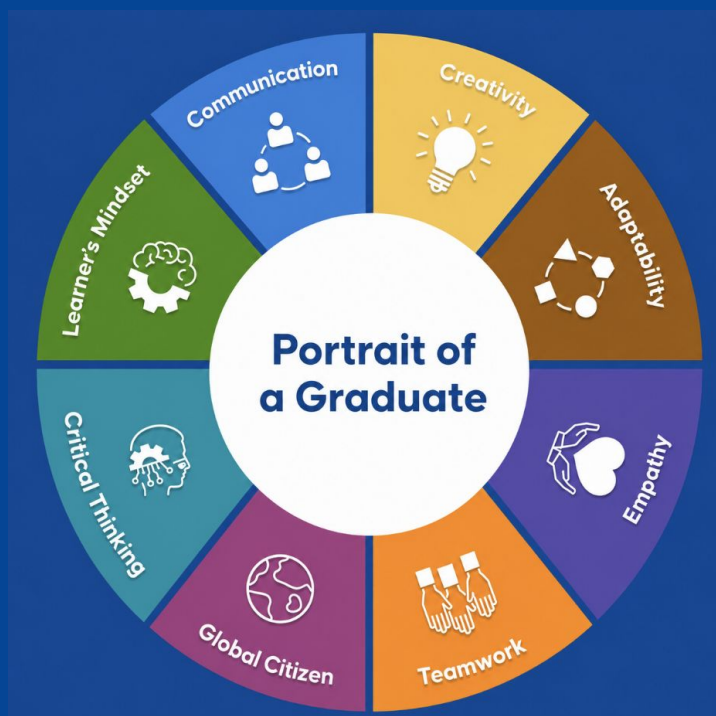


Portrait of a Graduate

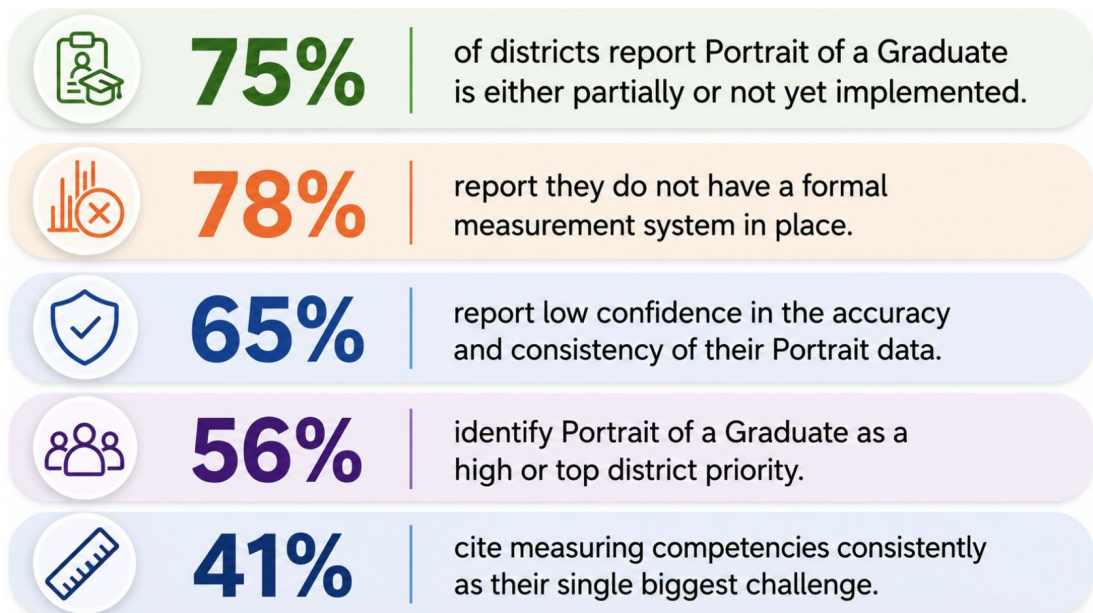
Where Districts Stand — and What Comes Next



Portrait of a Graduate - District Survey Findings 2026

This report captures the current state of Portrait of a Graduate implementation across school districts, informed by feedback from district leaders across dozens of states.

The data reveals a striking gap between intention and execution: Portrait of a Graduate is broadly recognized as a strategic priority, yet most districts still lack the infrastructure, measurement tools, and systemic alignment needed to bring it to life.



Why this matters now

Districts across the country are prioritizing Portrait of a Graduate as a framework for preparing students with the competencies and durable skills needed beyond academics.

What most still lack are the tools, systems, measurement infrastructure, and instructional alignment required to make those competencies measurable, visible, and sustainable.

Implementation Gap

Most districts have not yet moved from vision to execution, and classroom integration remains limited.

Measurement Crisis

Without reliable data, growth is invisible and outcomes cannot be clearly communicated or defended.

Urgent Opportunity

Strategic prioritization signals the field is ready — districts need infrastructure, not more inspiration.

The Promise and the Gap

Over the last several years, Portrait of a Graduate initiatives have become one of the most widely adopted frameworks in K–12 education.

Districts have invested significant time and energy defining the competencies they want students to carry beyond graduation, including communication, critical thinking, adaptability, creativity, collaboration, self-management, and others.

These Portraits represent a district's answer to one of the most fundamental questions in education: What do we want students to become?

As these initiatives mature, a more difficult question has emerged. Defining the Portrait was only the first step. Operationalizing that vision consistently across instruction, assessment, measurement, and reporting has proven far more challenging.

This is the challenge the field is facing right now. The gap is not one of intention. District leaders are deeply committed. The gap is structural: most districts still lack the tools, systems, and shared infrastructure needed to make Portrait competencies visible, trackable, and defensible.



What is Portrait of a Graduate?

A district-defined framework that outlines the competencies, skills, and dispositions students need to succeed beyond school, extending beyond academic achievement alone.



Why Measure It?

Without measurement, Portrait competencies remain aspirational. Measurement creates accountability, reveals growth, and enables evidence-based decision-making.



Why Now?

Districts are moving beyond definition. The field has reached an inflection point where execution infrastructure, not additional vision — is what ultimately determines impact.



The Implementation Gap

Most districts are still in the early stages of bringing Portrait of a Graduate to life.

The vision is widely shared. The execution infrastructure is not.

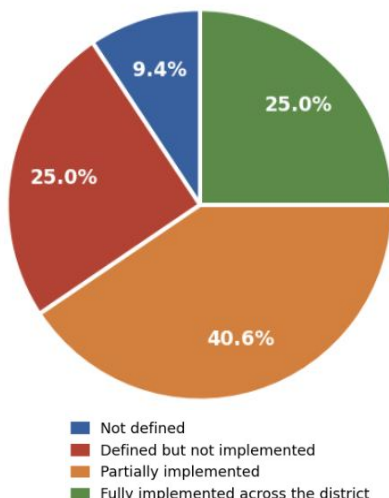
How this Research Was Conducted



Research Focus Areas

- Implementation status & classroom integration
- Longitudinal growth tracking
- Stakeholder communication & system alignment
- Measurement practices & data confidence
- Proficiency definition & validation
- Strategic priorities & leadership intent

Implementation & Clarity



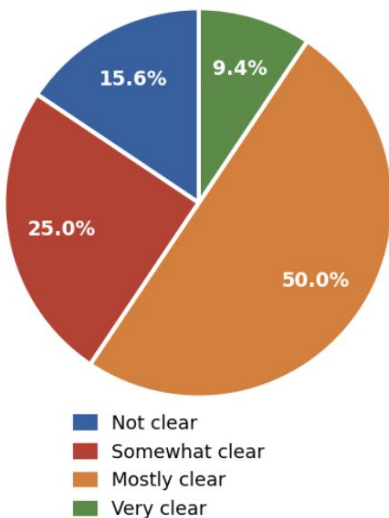
* 1. Current Status of a Portrait of a Graduate

Only 25% of districts report full, district-wide implementation.

40.6% — the largest group — describe their Portrait of a Graduate as partially implemented.

34% have either not defined a Portrait of a Graduate or have defined one without putting it into practice.

Most districts are still in the early stages of bringing Portrait of a Graduate to life.



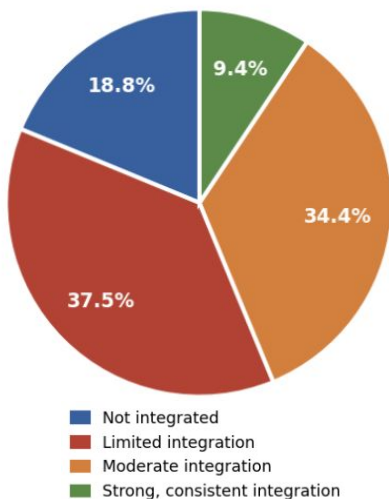
* 2. How Clearly Are Competencies Defined & Understood?

50% describe competencies as “mostly clear” — understood in pockets, but not consistently across the system.

40% say competencies are only “somewhat clear” across stakeholders.

Only 9.4% report competencies are “very clear” to all educators and students.

For most districts, a shared understanding of what Portrait of a Graduate means in practice remains elusive.



* 3. Integration into Classroom Instruction

Just 9.4% report strong, consistent integration of Portrait of a Graduate into daily instruction.

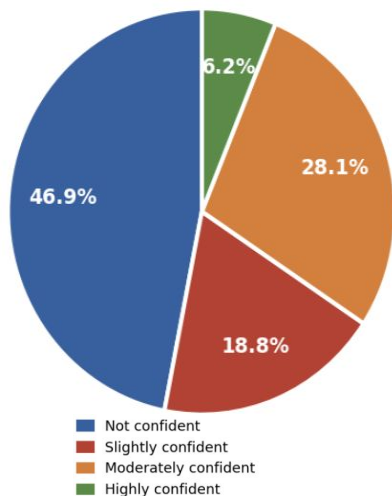
More than half report limited integration or none at all.

“Moderate” integration (34.4%) often reflects awareness without consistent classroom practice.

For many districts, Portrait of a Graduate still lives more in hallway posters than in lesson plans.

*Questions sourced from the 2026 District Leader Survey

Data, Measurement & Tracking



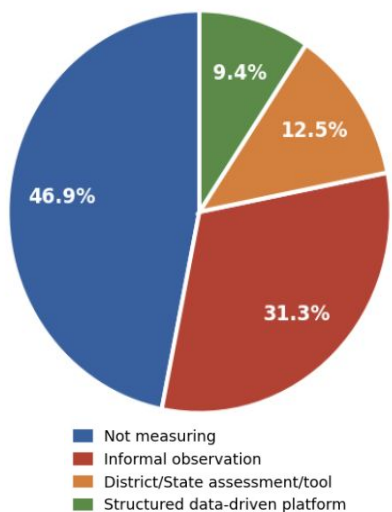
* 4. Confidence in PoG Data Accuracy & Consistency

Nearly half (46.9%) report being “not confident” in the accuracy and consistency of their Portrait of a Graduate data.

Only 6.2% express high confidence in their data.

Without reliable measurement systems, evidence-based decisions about student outcomes become difficult to support or sustain.

This represents one of the most urgent infrastructure gaps in the field.



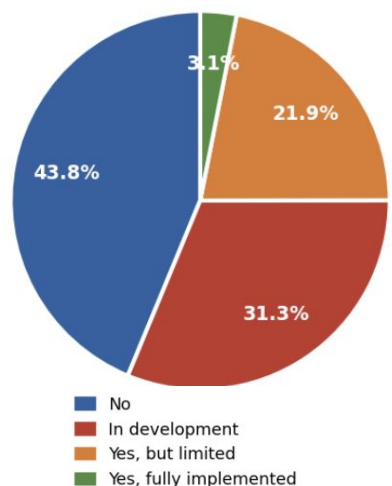
* 5. How Districts Are Measuring Student Alignment

46.9% of districts report not measuring student alignment to Portrait of a Graduate at all.

Another 31.3% rely primarily on informal observation — approaches that are often subjective and inconsistent.

Just 9.4% use a structured, data-driven platform to measure alignment.

Without a reliable measurement system, student growth remains largely invisible.



* 6. Tracking Student Growth Over Time

43.8% of districts report having no system to track Portrait of a Graduate growth across grade levels.

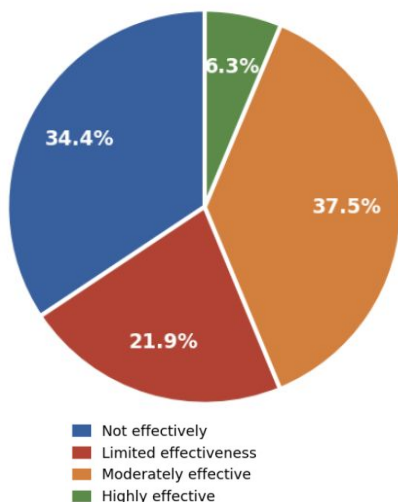
Another **31.3%** say their tracking approach is still “in development,” with no formal system currently in place.

Only a small fraction report having a fully implemented longitudinal tracking model.

The field needs scalable grade-band tools that can follow student growth from PreK through graduation.

*Questions sourced from the 2026 District Leader Survey

Communication & Proficiency Definition



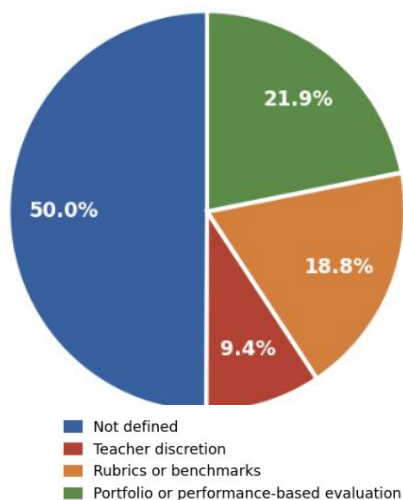
* 7. Communicating Outcomes to Families & Community

56% of districts report communicating Portrait of a Graduate outcomes with limited effectiveness or not at all.

Only 6.3% feel highly effective in communicating evidence-based student outcomes to families and the broader community.

When families, boards, and stakeholders cannot clearly see outcomes, trust and long-term investment begin to stall.

Clear, accessible reporting remains a critical missing link between district implementation and community confidence.



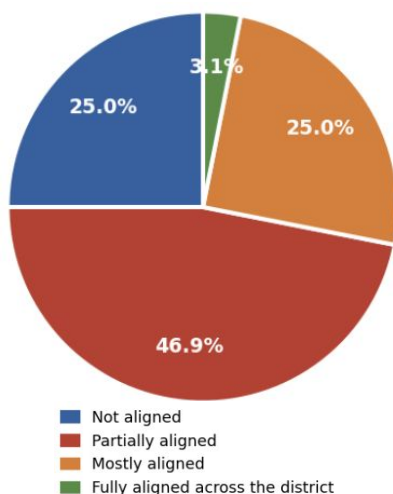
* 8. Defining & Validating Student Proficiency

Half of districts report having no defined process for validating Portrait of a Graduate proficiency.

Another **9.4%** rely primarily on teacher discretion, creating inconsistency across classrooms and schools.

18.8% use rubrics, while **21.9%** use portfolio or performance-based evaluation methods.

Without shared standards and measurable criteria, “proficiency” can mean something different in every building.



* 9. Alignment of District Systems to PoG

Nearly half of districts (**46.9%**) describe their systems as only “partially aligned” to Portrait of a Graduate.

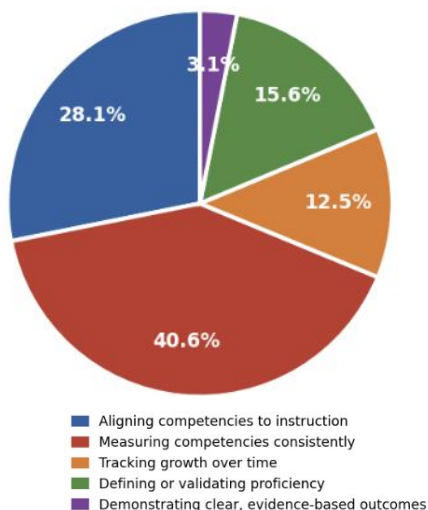
25% report no meaningful alignment across instruction, assessment, or professional development.

Just 3.1% say their district is fully aligned system wide.

Portrait of a Graduate cannot scale effectively when the systems surrounding it are moving in different directions.

*Questions sourced from the 2026 District Leader Survey

Challenges & Strategic Priorities



* 10. Districts' Biggest Challenges in Advancing PoG

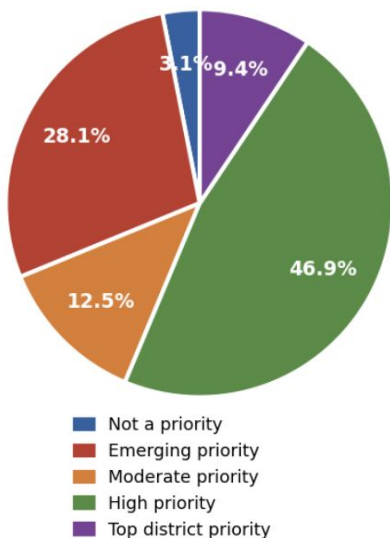
Measuring competencies consistently remains the top challenge, cited by **40.6%** of districts.

Aligning competencies to classroom instruction follows at **28.1%**.

15.6% report defining or validating proficiency as their biggest barrier.

Another **12.5%** identify tracking student growth over time as a major challenge.

These barriers are deeply interconnected — progress in one area often depends on progress across the others.



* 11. PoG as a Strategic Priority for 2026

46.9% of districts identify Portrait of a Graduate as a “high priority” within their 2026 strategic plan.

Another **9.4%** describe it as their district's top strategic priority.

28.1% characterize it as an emerging priority that is continuing to build momentum.

The strategic intent is clear. What districts need now is the infrastructure to operationalize it.

The intent is clear

56.3% of district leaders identify Portrait of a Graduate as either a high or top strategic priority for 2026/2027.

The field is not waiting for conviction — it is waiting for the infrastructure, systems, and measurement tools needed to act on it.

What Success Looks Like: Voices from the Field

When district leaders were asked what “success” looks like over the next 2–3 years, four themes emerged clearly and consistently across responses.

01

Instructional Integration

Portrait of a Graduate competencies embedded into unit plans, integrated into classroom instruction, and reinforced through daily learning experiences — not just displayed on hallway walls.

02

Student Ownership

Students can articulate and demonstrate their competencies through reflection tools, portfolios, and evidence of growth over time.

03

Measurement & Data

Clear rubrics, grade-band scorecards, and district dashboards that surface evidence of student growth from PreK through graduation.

04

Systemic Coherence

Vertical alignment across PreK–12 supported by consistent professional development, aligned assessment tools, and clear public-facing communication.

* What would “success” look like for your Portrait of a Graduate over the next 2–3 years?

“Continuing to provide learning opportunities for our staff on how they can connect the competencies into their instruction and learning experiences. Expand on our student showcase for student portfolio development. Have a clear, unified vision across our district connected to the Portrait and preparing students for their tomorrow.”

District Leader–Illinois

“Success means students graduate not only academically prepared, but also able to demonstrate the competencies needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. Achievement matters, but so does evidence of adaptability, collaboration, and the ability to apply learning beyond the classroom..”

District Leader–Pennsylvania

“Each student have a Portrait Scorecard that shows their progress. The scorecards would be grade band based, one for K-2, one for 3-5, one for 6-8 and one for 9-12..”

District Leader–New Mexico

“Clear vertical articulation, consistent ability to assess competencies at each grade level, student electronic portfolio to track proficiency, ability to communicate to public student progress in each competency area..”

District Leader–New York

*Questions sourced from the 2026 District Leader Survey



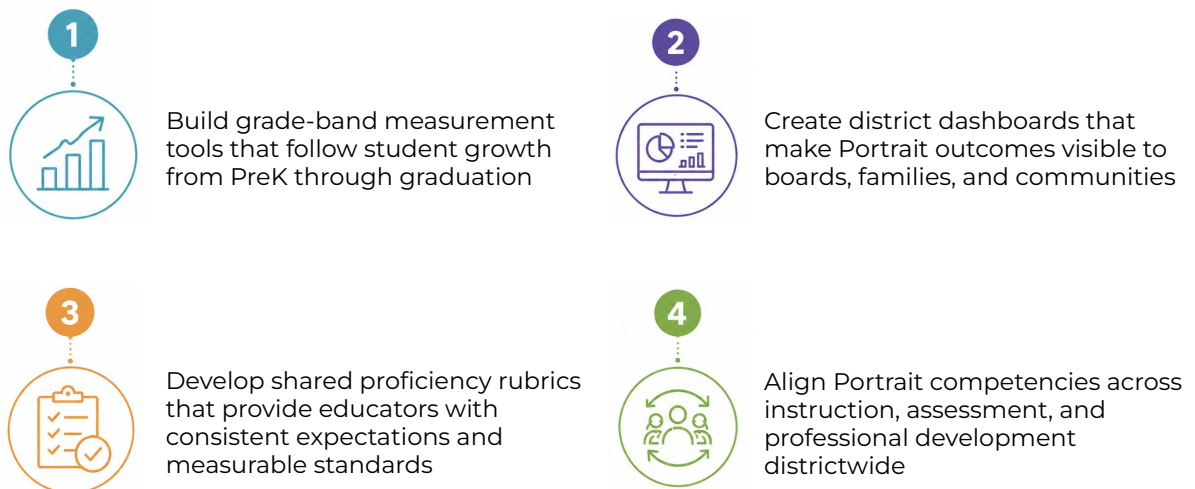
The Intention Is There. The Infrastructure Is Not.

Districts across the country are prioritizing Portrait of a Graduate as a framework for preparing students with the competencies and durable skills needed beyond academics. The commitment is genuine. The strategic intent is clear.

What most districts still lack are the tools, systems, measurement infrastructure, and instructional alignment needed to make Portrait measurable, visible, actionable, and sustainable across the district.

The field has defined the destination. What it needs now is the infrastructure to get there.

The Opportunity Ahead



About Student EI

Student EI is an education technology company focused on helping school districts operationalize, measure, and support Portrait of a Graduate competencies and durable skills across the district.

Through evidence-based assessments, leveraged through AI technology, Student EI helps districts better understand student readiness beyond academics while supporting instructional integration, longitudinal growth tracking, and measurable student outcomes.

Student EI's proprietary platform provides districts with actionable insights into student strengths, growth opportunities, and areas where additional instructional support may be needed.

For additional information, please contact info@studentei.com or visit [studentei.com](https://www.studentei.com).