Introduction

The district approved Capstone encourages schools to empower students and create portfolios demonstrating college and career readiness. The Capstone Portfolio was designed as a rigorous pathway to demonstrate competency in English and/or math. The portfolio allows schools to monitor student progress over time. It also provides a process-oriented method for meeting the new graduation requirements compared to the other test-centric options.

A key component for implementing the Capstone is the planning of eight district-approved key criteria prior to accreditation, included in this guide.

For any additional questions, please contact our team any time at capstone@dpsk12.org.

About the Maturity Models

The models presented below were collaboratively created by the Competency Based Learning team to help schools assess their work in moving towards practices that support student-driven learning and the Capstone. They will be used by schools and the Competency Based Learning team to track the progression of Capstone implementation and better determine next steps for a school to take. These are not meant to be used in any specific time frame, but instead be used as guides towards creating successful best practices, career portfolios, and determine when new initiatives can begin.
The Capstone was designed as an \textit{equally rigorous} pathway to demonstrating competency.

Starting in 9th grade, the Capstone Portfolio tracks artifacts that demonstrate competency through 12th grade.
The Eight Criteria

The Capstone accreditation process revolves around the planning of eight key criteria split into two categories: design and implementation.

**DESIGN**

1. The purpose and goals of the school’s capstone portfolio plan is clearly stated.

2. Portfolio demonstrates mastery of English and/or math if it is to be used as a means to meet the graduation requirements.

3. Portfolio products and artifacts are tied to rubrics built from standards/competencies in English or math that clearly define college and career ready outcomes.

4. Portfolio implementation steps, associated barriers, and mitigation strategies are created.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

5. A progress monitoring process for college and career readiness, starting with a student’s capstone inception and continuing through completion, is outlined.

6. An oversight committee to supervise, guide, and audit the capstone portfolio for ensuring equal rigor to other pathways is identified.

7. A rigorous portfolio assessment and evaluation process that promotes fairness and ensures students will be ready for college and/or career is developed.

8. A system to manage student portfolios is determined.
### Menu of Options for Graduation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCUPLACER</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASVAB</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
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<tr>
<td>CE</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPSTONE</td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>Portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKKEYS</td>
<td>Bronze or higher</td>
<td>Bronze or higher</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASSESSMENT</td>
<td>Statewide Criteria</td>
<td>Statewide Criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDUSTRY CERT.</td>
<td>District Approved</td>
<td>District Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low touch support:</td>
<td>Collect work and upload it into some sort of storage</td>
<td>Collect and sort work in Schoology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Platform Expectation</td>
<td>Establish norms on work using standards and/or competencies</td>
<td>Set up tracking system and system to talk next steps with students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDI Expectation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High touch support:</td>
<td>Collect and sort work in Schoology</td>
<td>Establish process for determining final work to go into portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platform Expectation</td>
<td>Set up tracking system and system to talk next steps with students.</td>
<td>Establish process for auditing student work in teacher teams.</td>
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<td>DDI Expectation</td>
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### Scoring Student Work on Competencies

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating schools can develop an understanding of each level using student work from their own school.</td>
<td>Participating schools can collaborate and norm with other participating schools.</td>
<td>Participating schools can explain and support rigor supporting CCR expectations to staff.</td>
<td>Participating schools can collaborate and norm with other participating members outside of designated collaboration sessions.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating schools can look at student work from other schools to develop an understanding of the rubric.</td>
<td>Participating schools can submit exemplars for some levels of a rubric based on intra school norming.</td>
<td>Participating schools can submit exemplars for every level of a rubric based on intra school norming.</td>
<td>Participating schools can submit exemplars for every level of a rubric based on inter school norming.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating schools can understand and norm around the rigor supporting CCR expectations.</td>
<td>Participating schools can explain and support rigor supporting CCR expectations to staff.</td>
<td>Participating schools can explain and support rigor supporting CCR expectations to staff and students.</td>
<td>Participating schools can explain and support the rigor supporting CCR expectations to any member of their community.</td>
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</table>
## Shifting Pedagogy

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I2</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices that result in teachers tying at least one type of assessment to the competencies.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices that result in teachers tying multiple types of assessments to the competencies.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices that result in teachers referencing the competencies in their lessons to set expectations.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in students reflecting on their own and others’ work in the Capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I5</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in teachers referencing the competencies in their lessons to set expectations.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in teachers using competencies to adjust their work in real time.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in students using the competencies to reflect on their learning.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in students reflecting on their own and others’ work in the Capstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I7</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in a few students and teachers having discussions about competencies and what next steps should be taken.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in some students and teachers having discussions about competencies and what next steps should be taken.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in most students and teachers having discussions about competencies and what next steps should be taken.</td>
<td>Participating schools can support practices at their school that result in all students and teachers having discussions about competencies and what next steps should be taken.</td>
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**Best Practices for Capstone**

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<tr>
<td>Participating schools can prototype and refine practices to upload work into student portfolios.</td>
<td>Participating schools can codify practices that are used to manage and track student portfolios so all staff can support the capstone.</td>
<td>Participating schools can monitor and adjust practices storing and tracking practices to best meet both graduation requirements and the vision of their school.</td>
<td>Participating schools can monitor and adjust practices to ensure students are able to store and track their work on their own in a way that meets both graduation requirements and the vision of their school.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. The purpose and goals of the school’s capstone portfolio plan is clearly stated.

Denver City High School’s mission is to prepare students for college and careers. Our capstone approach will be available to all students. The purpose for offering the capstone is to provide opportunity that both meets graduation requirements and provides a pathway honoring student passions and exploration of the world.

We intend to present the capstone as one of our cornerstone approaches to ensuring that each student is prepared for college and career. We will support each student to create a “working portfolio” and each student will have an opportunity to enroll in a capstone course. This course can be extra time and opportunity for students to meet their graduation requirement. It can also be time for students to pursue a passion project if they are on track to meeting graduation requirements. Therefore, the goal of our capstone plan is to meet the varied needs of our students.

2. Portfolio demonstrates mastery of English and/or math if it is to be used as a means to meet the graduation requirements.

Our capstone portfolio will be aligned to both English and math. Students and teachers are instructed during the first weeks of high school to begin curating and tracking progress towards being college and career ready in English and math. Student artifacts are directly linked to the rubrics that are used to score the work and therefore provide justification of being college and career ready. We will require each student to have sufficient artifacts that show college and career readiness (proficient or higher) on all learning targets for the district curated and approved rubrics.

3. Capstone products and artifacts must be tied to rubrics built from standards/competencies in English or math that clearly define college and career ready outcomes.

We will be using DPS created rubrics and competencies which are built from CCSS and CAS. The rubrics clearly define college and career ready with a score of a 3 out of 4 for both English and math.

4. Defines school capstone portfolio implementation steps, associated barriers, and mitigation strategies.

Below is our implementation plan, associated barriers and mitigation strategies.

Communication Plan
April/May: send letter home to incoming 9th grade students and add information onto our website about the new graduation requirements (NGR) and the capstone portfolio (CP).
August 2017: explain NGR and CP to all incoming 9th graders in the welcome letter to students and parents.
August 2017: in advisory, have all teachers discuss NGR and CP.
September 2017: explain the new graduation requirements, capstone portfolio, and capstone course at back to school night.
Use advisory to meet with students once a month to reiterate the importance of keeping a capstone portfolio and review progress.

Continues on following page
Appendix

# Exemplar Sample Accreditation Plan

4. Defines school capstone portfolio implementation steps, associated barriers, and mitigation strategies. (continued)

**Implementation Plan**

- **April 2016:** Submit accreditation application to the district for the capstone option.
- **August 2017:** Explain NGR and CP approach to all staff. Vote in SLT to make the SLT the oversight committee for the capstone portfolio.
- **August 2017:** Initial committee meeting to build out the communication plan and professional development plan for the school.
- **August/September:** Begin communication plan to students and parents (see above)
- **December 2017:** Team meetings, when appropriate analyze student work in all grades to help build capacity for using the rubrics and competencies.
- **December 2017:** Ensure by end of semester one that each student has at least two artifacts tied to district rubrics—even if they are not at CCR level. (Using 9-10 English rubrics)
- **2018-2019:** Pilot capstone course with the graduating class of 2019 in preparation of having students who need to show CCR in the coming years with the extra time afforded by the capstone course. This pilot capstone course will be open to all students.

**Professional Development Plan**

- **August 2017:** as mentioned above, school staff will have communication on NGR and CP.
- **Summer 2017:** training for all 17-18 teachers in the school on the school’s plan to address the NGR and CP. This will involve using Schoology as the main portfolio management system, training on using district rubrics to measure against CCR. In addition, instruction, supports, and assessment strategy for competencies will be rolled out in conjunction with the Competency Based Learning Team.
- **October 2017:** Each discipline team will use district rubrics and competencies (where applicable) to assess student work in all grades. This will help develop capacity of the teachers in all grades in preparation for the coming years when every grade level is helping to support the capstone portfolio.

Using competencies and new rubrics will be a challenge for all stakeholders.

**Mitigation Strategies:** we will work with the CBL team to use practices that support a competency-based approach. In addition, starting all teachers with competencies and rubrics will begin to build capacity and create an internal support system.

Portfolios are new for our school and could pose new problems.

**Mitigation Strategies:** We will begin having all grades start with portfolios during advisement time. This will help generate best practice and help support the shift in school culture. At the moment most stakeholders are unfamiliar with the new graduation requirements, competencies, and the capstone process.

**Mitigation strategies:** We will follow the communication plan as explained above and continue to keep all three present in our everyday communication with students and parents. We will utilize advisory as a central hub to communicate with students.

5. Outline a progress monitoring process for college readiness starting with capstone inception and continuing through completion.

We will use advisory as the central organizational structure for progress monitoring, organizing and tracking the portfolio systems. Students will meet with advisors on a weekly basis to discuss progress and curation of artifacts in their portfolios. Advisors will loop with students every year to help make progress monitoring easier. Advisors will work closely with counselors to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to enroll in AP courses and receive additional courses to increase the opportunities to complete their portfolio. The capstone oversight committee will periodically collect names from advisors of students who are not on track to complete a capstone portfolio and make adjustments where needed.
6. Identify an oversight committee to supervise, guide, and audit the capstone portfolio to ensure it is an equally rigorous pathway relative to the other menu of graduation options.

We have identified the school leadership team (SLT) as the main oversight committee. In addition, we will use teacher leaders in each discipline as advisors to the SLT. The SLT has made the following decisions:

- Agreed to use district created competencies and rubrics.
- Determined that four artifacts are needed in English and one proficient demonstration for all 36 competencies in math. This will ensure it is an equally rigorous pathway relative to the other menu of graduation options.
- Instituted advisory in all grades starting in 2017-18.
- Adopt Schoology as our LMS and portfolio management system.
- Created the policy that student portfolios need to be checked and accounted for at least every semester.
- The SLT will oversee auditing portfolios of students who use them as evidence of meeting the CCR requirement for graduation.

7. Develop a rigorous portfolio assessment and evaluation process that promotes fairness and ensures students will be ready for college and/or career.

Our vision is that portfolios will become the fabric of the school and enhance our vision, supporting the unique path of each student. We will work with every student to ensure that the portfolio is the most accurate representation of their abilities and traits. The culture of portfolios that we will create will make it easier to assess and evaluate each portfolio for CCR. Again, this will be done through advisory with the same advisor over four years.

For those students who will need until the end of senior year or longer to show competence in English and math, the counselors and advisors will work together to provide extra opportunities to meet the same standard.

In addition, our department teams have been meeting regularly for the last several years to norm on best practices and mastery of skills through the SLO process. We will continue this alignment procedure with the new competencies and rubrics. Creating this alignment through regular meetings will create an ongoing check and balance against reduced rigor and differences of interpretation for student success.

8. Determine a system to manage student portfolios.

We will use two strategies to help manage student portfolios. First we will encourage the use of Google documents and drive for all school related work. This will create consistency and help students maintain one central place for their work. The comment feature within Google docs is a logical place to provide an artifact score and verify that work is a CCR exemplar. Secondly, we have adopted Schoology as our learning management system (LMS) and will use it to house the portfolios for both English and math. Schoology will track with each student, houses district curriculum resources, and rubrics which will help with the shifts to a more competency based approach. In addition, having students loop with the same advisory teacher will help manage the student portfolios.

Please note: this exemplar sample is meant to serve as a guide, not a mandate for how to implement the capstone in your school. We understand that every school has nuance and context, and do not expect or desire for a capstone plan to mimic this exactly.
FAQs

What is the accreditation process?

Please address the 8 criteria mentioned above and submit the overall plan to capstone@dpsk12.org. The district will review your plan, provide support if needed, and approve as long as the 8 criteria are met.

What is the role of the school in the “district approved Capstone”?

Schools develop the plan for ensuring that students are college and career ready in both English and math. This allows schools to tailor the capstone to their vision and mission. In addition, schools are closest to students and their work and therefore should be empowered and trusted to evaluate student work.

How can the district help ensure that student artifacts are college and career ready?

The district will work in partnership with schools to help further develop norms of grading and interpretation of rubrics. The CBL Team will also be responsible for auditing student work to ensure that schools are grading to high standards.

How is a portfolio defined?

Interpretation is up to the school. It is possible that a single learning experience produces a body of work adequate to show college and career readiness. However, it is recommended to mandate that students provide multiple CCR artifacts as it will reduce ambiguity in assessing the overall work. Mandating multiple artifacts will also make it easier to monitor progress.

What about students who have individualized educational plans (IEPs)?

It is difficult to clearly define an approach to special education. Any plan requires not only expert interpretation of laws, but also a deep understanding of each individual student. We would like to invite you to be on our working committee to help further develop guidelines for students who have IEPs or attend special education classes.

What about students who are English Language Learners, do they really have to show competence in English? What if they are highly literate in their native language?

The Colorado Board of Education passed the menu of options in 2013 and clearly indicate that competence must be shown in English. The district and associated district supports are available to help schools develop support plans for students to ensure equity and rigor are achievable in these instances.
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