Performance Assessment Profile: Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)

By Charlie Thompson and Young Whan Choi

Four people walk into the library, take a seat alongside the facilitator, and introduce themselves. One is a teacher and the other three are current students or recent high school graduates. They look expectantly at Elena,[1] who stands at the front of the room, dressed professionally and emanating an impressive calm. This is the culmination of a rigorous year of work. She turns to the screen and begins to present her senior capstone project.

Elena introduces her topic with visuals and data: Four years ago, she moved to Oakland and faced a new community with new problems. One of the biggest problems she observed: flavored-tobacco products everywhere that were affecting the health of her new community. Elena describes her summer internship with a local tobacco control program, which prompted her interest in researching this issue in greater depth and developing a solution. She presents her thesis for the research project, explaining, "Tobacco companies intentionally target teens with their marketing. This means teens are more likely to start smoking [early], leading to an overall less healthy community." She points out that the goal of the companies is to make money, and so they target young people, using "kid-friendly flavors" to hook them early on nicotine. Her proposed solution? Ban the sale of tobacco products at grocery stores. She notes that these grocery stores are often within close proximity to schools, making the products easily accessible to young people. To support her thesis, Elena presents data from a reputable local news source, as well as visuals of a smoker's lung, to highlight the negative impacts of e-cigarettes on users' health.

Elena also describes the action research project she completed, through which she surveyed 75 students from her high school to learn how frequently they are exposed to tobacco products and marketing. She presented her findings to a 9th grade class to promote awareness of the insidious nature of marketing these addictive substances to teens and the negative health consequences of smoking. Finally, she reflects on the scope of this work with pride, saying, "At the beginning of the year, I thought it would be impossible because my first language is not English. At the start, I was scared, and afraid of how it would be, and of asking for help. Now I'm here. Two of the skills I have improved through this process [are] my public speaking skills and my writing skills." She began this year believing the capstone project to be an impossible feat, and yet she emerged with the tools to be a strong, skilled advocate for her community. Because Elena is an English learner, some people, including herself, might underestimate her ability to provide such a high level of writing, presentation, and research in a language that she acquired recently.

The lights in the library flicker on and Elena stands poised, ready to respond to the panelists' questions with the confidence of a seasoned professional. The facilitator, an English teacher and senior pathway adviser, begins by asking Elena, "What would you say to people who say that you should be able to buy whatever you want?" The question is tricky; it employs a slight false equivocation between free will and addiction, but Elena reframes the issue. She responds confidently, saying, "[Teens] are not buying because they want to, but because

they have to. Tobacco companies are getting to us by selling in grocery stores. I wanted to try [flavored tobacco products] because they look like candy. People say they have free will, but they don't have it … It's suicidal, consuming products that will make them die in the future."

Elena uses this opportunity to reiterate the argument she honed throughout her year of research: Tobacco marketing targets teens and children who are too young to be discerning consumers. These companies are not selling tobacco; they are selling addiction, and they are targeting students like her.

Once Elena leaves, the four panelists and facilitator discuss the strength of her presentation. They reflect on her poise in responding to questions, highlighting her ability to respond thoughtfully while off-script. One of the teachers on the panel shares that Elena presented her research to his 9th grade class, and that his students were impressed and informed by her passionate presentation. Finally, they reflect on her response to the question about free consumer choice. Some panelists enjoyed her reframing of the issue, while others wanted her to respond more directly to the question; the whole panel, however, agrees that she is a knowledgeable, passionate advocate for this issue. She will graduate, continue to grow her impressive skill set, and engage deeply with her community and the world beyond.

This is the kind of graduate that Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) works to create through the senior capstone process: a student who can communicate complicated concepts deftly, using credible evidence and critical thinking to support an argument. Performance assessments, such as OUSD's culminating assessment, place an emphasis on assessing students' higher-order thinking skills, supporting the development of students' deep content knowledge, and driving high-quality instruction that supports 21st century learning. Oakland's senior capstone project asks students to study authentic challenges in their communities, identify and analyze contributing factors, and present that information to invested stakeholders. Throughout this process, students engage deeply with their topics, challenge their expectations for themselves, and emerge "college-, career-, and community-ready."[2]

Background on Oakland Unified

OUSD houses 121 schools and roughly 50,000 students in Oakland, CA.[3] The current OUSD student population is majority Hispanic or Latino (46%) and African American (24%), as well as socioeconomically disadvantaged (76%) (Figure 1). Similar to national trends, OUSD teachers are mostly White (51%), with the next largest demographic group being African American, totaling less than half the amount of White teachers (21%).[4] Academic achievement rates in both math and English language arts are lower than the statewide average, as is the graduation rate, which is currently at 72%. However, the graduation rate has increased roughly 4% from last year, which is the first significant increase in the graduation rate in several years.[5]

Figure 1: Oakland Unified School District at a Glance (2017–18)

Student Enrollment	50,231
Schools	121 74% District-Managed, 26% Charter
Race/Ethnicity[i]	46% Latinx 24% African American 14% Asian, Filipinx, or Pacific Islander 10% White 5% Other or Not Reported
Students from Low-Income Families[ii]	74%
English Learners[iii]	33%

[i] Totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.
[ii] Percentage of students who qualified for a free and reduced-price lunch in 2017–18.
[iii] Does not include English learners who have been reclassified as "fluent English proficient."

Source: California Department of Education DataQuest

Historical Context of Performance Assessments in Oakland Unified

Oakland has long included performance assessments in the district curriculum, although its approach to doing so has evolved over time. The curricular goals of the small learning communities (SLCs) movement in the district led to the early implementation of performance assessments, specifically a policy that used senior projects as graduation requirements for OUSD students. OUSD is currently building on the foundation of this graduation requirement with its graduate capstone work, a more formal term that denotes a shift in both policy and practice, outlined further below.

OUSD began emphasizing performance assessments with its implementation of the statewide small schools movement that began in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1984, the California State Assembly expanded a successful pilot program of California Partnership Academies (CPAs), which use a career academy model that features themed SLCs housed within larger schools.[6] In 1999, at a time when "the district's dropout rate was 33 percent, compared with a 10 percent dropout rate statewide," local community organizations in Oakland leveraged this statewide CPA movement to push for OUSD to create small schools and SLCs.[7] Organizers hoped that smaller learning environments would support relationship-building between teachers and students, encourage authentic learning, and increase motivation for students to graduate armed with tangible skills.[8] As such, OUSD focused on establishing SLCs with restricted enrollment alongside student-centered and industry-specific learning experiences.

In 2000, Oakland passed the New Small Autonomous Schools policy, which stipulated that the district would create 10 new small schools in 3 years. The first of those schools, Life Academy of Health and Bioscience, featured a student-centered curriculum, relevant internships, and relationship-based learning geared toward the health care field.[9] Connecting academic subjects, career themes, and student readiness proved to be a lever to student success. Even 10 years after Life Academy opened, so many students noted it as their top choice in Oakland's "options enrollment" school choice program that it had an acceptance rate of 39%.[10] This enrollment system uses a lottery that allows students in OUSD to choose any district school or SLC. This system gives priority to students who have siblings or family at

their choice and to students who live in the neighborhood of their choice. The remaining students are randomly assigned to their ranked choices, so there is no academic preferential treatment.[11] Industry-specific themed SLCs within schools, such as those at Life Academy, moved OUSD priorities further toward the current district mission of "serving the whole child, eliminating inequity, and providing each child with excellent teachers."[12] Educating the whole child and implementing student-centered learning practices required that schools broaden their assessment systems to include methods that assess holistic aspects of student readiness.

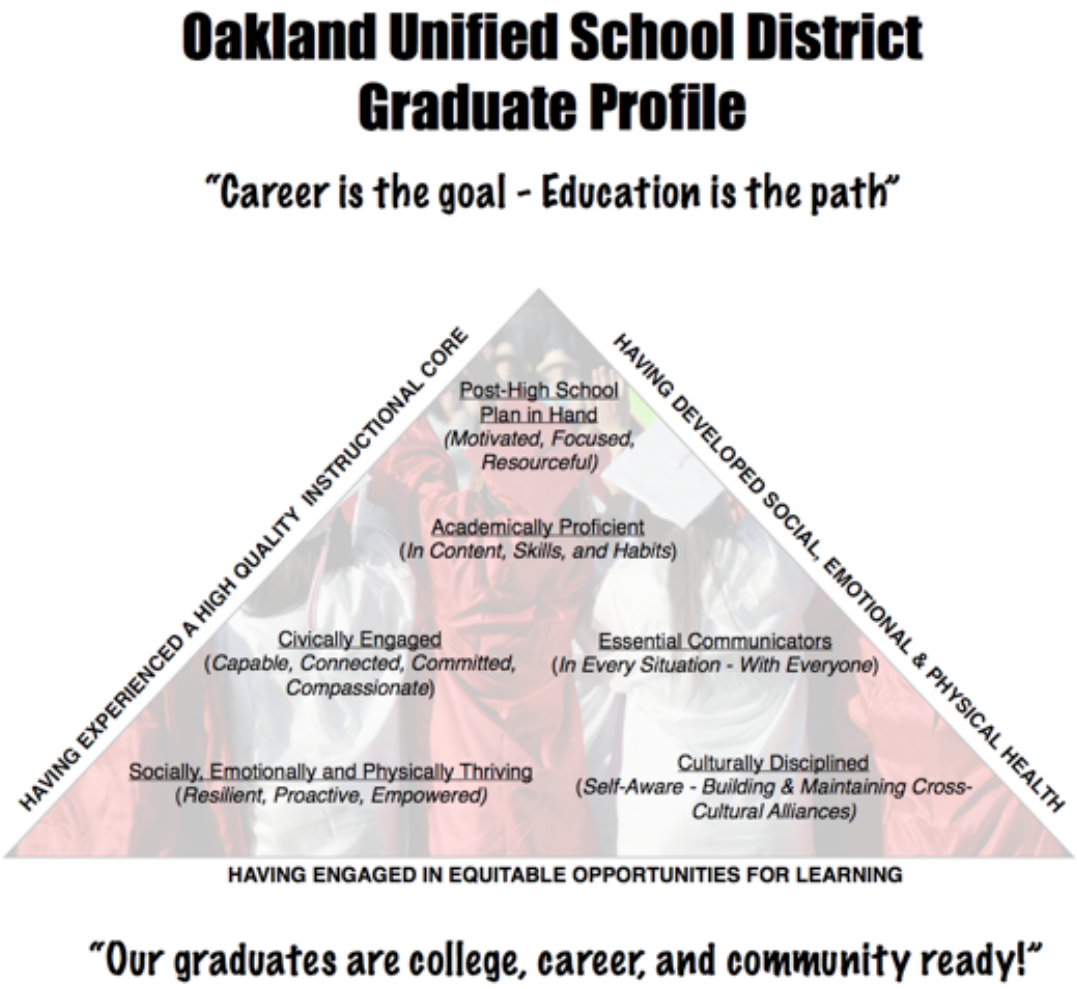
In 2005, OUSD adopted the senior project as a graduation requirement for students. This district mandate conceived the senior project as a vehicle for students to demonstrate "achievement of schoolwide learning goals and designated key content standards" through a "serious research project or exhibition."[13] Although faculty members and coaches at individual school sites recognized the potential in a well-implemented senior project that featured common expectations for graduating seniors, different schools required different levels of rigor in both process and product. Language and expectations surrounding the senior project remained decentralized until an opportunity to better codify expectations for SLCs and graduation requirements arose, in the form of OUSD's participation in the Linked Learning District Initiative.

In 2010, OUSD applied for a grant from The California Center for College and Career (ConnectEd), supported by the James Irvine Foundation, to develop and scale Linked Learning pathways, an education approach that features active, industry-oriented, cohort-based learning. Linked Learning was a natural extension of the small schools and SLCs movement that began in 2000. While SLCs break high schools of 1,000 or more students into themed cohorts of "houses" or "academies," Linked Learning pathways offer students opportunities within those houses or academies to complete a college preparatory curriculum, a sequence of career and technical education (CTE) courses, and work-based learning to facilitate students' engagement in learning and high school completion.[14] OUSD's 2010 Linked Learning pilot began with four pathways and has since grown, totaling 29 pathways in 14 high schools throughout the district in the 2018–19 school year.[15] In the 2018–19 school year, 87% of OUSD sophomores were enrolled in a pathway or SLC, with a district goal of enrolling 80% of all high school students and 100% of rising sophomores in a Linked Learning pathway by 2020.[16] This signals Linked Learning is a district priority.[17]

When fully developed, a Linked Learning pathway provides a hands-on curriculum that allows students to engage with projects and authentic forms of assessment that are tied to industry themes and allow students to demonstrate breadth, depth, and application of learned skills. The "tasks and projects in Linked Learning pathways are often multidisciplinary and problem-based, and connections to the real world aim to be authentic and transparent."[18] Although the senior project graduation requirement existed prior to the implementation of Linked Learning in the district, the expansion of Linked Learning provided a natural opportunity to strengthen the senior project requirement. As such, district leaders leveraged the emphasis on performance assessments and project-based learning within the Linked Learning approach as an opportunity to revamp the senior project in partnership with teachers and school sites. Strengthening the senior project meant redefining the parameters and expectations of the project and calibrating quality across the district to ensure that all students graduate college-, career-, and community-ready. The district has set the ambitious goal of 80% of pathways participating in the graduate capstone in the 2018–19 school year.[19]

In 2014, the manager of career and technical education and the manager of performance assessments at OUSD, positions housed within the Linked Learning office, collaborated to reenvision the senior project graduation requirement. This process began with a vision of what an OUSD graduate should know and be able to do, called the Graduate Profile (Figure 2).[20] To create the Graduate Profile, members of the OUSD central office staff convened teachers to discuss and determine what students need to know and be able to do to be successful beyond high school. The Graduate Profile served as a north star, orienting curricula and performance assessments toward this idea of a "college-, career-, and community-ready" OUSD graduate, per the OUSD mission statement. This Graduate Profile was OUSD's first step toward aligning expectations for the new graduate capstone project with shared outcomes, and it highlighted academic proficiency, civic engagement, and communication among the essential skills for a prepared graduate. The OUSD graduate capstone team used these three skills as the foundation for the graduate capstone expectations. Although the Graduate Profile is not an official tenet of OUSD policy, it is generally used and accepted broadly by teachers as a guide for instructional goals.

Figure 2: OUSD's Graduate Profile



Source: Meeting Slides, OUSD Professional Development, 9/11/18

Teachers and Linked Learning staff then used this Graduate Profile to determine the competencies that the graduate capstone rubric should assess to determine students' eligibility for graduation. These teams of teachers and Linked Learning staff featured members from intentionally different school contexts, including schools of varying sizes and schools educating historically underserved students. They focused on students being "academically proficient," "civically engaged," and "essential communicators," resulting in two common district rubrics—one for writing and one for oral presentation—that teachers are now asked to use to assess OUSD seniors in their graduate capstone projects.

Many educators create their own assessment tools for classroom use, which can be both complementary to and at odds with implementing a districtwide rubric to assess student outcomes on the graduate capstone. Throughout the evolution of the capstone, OUSD has prioritized this balancing act in both developing the rubric and establishing respectful partnerships that build buy-in among schools and teachers. The district recognizes that a focus on compliance distracts from the ultimate goal of a common rubric—establishing shared criteria to drive instructional improvement. Thus, OUSD strives to keep the goal of improving the learning experience for students at the heart of the initiative. This collaborative spirit and student-centered lens are essential elements of the graduate capstone story. In 2014–15, the first year of implementation, the district did not endorse any rubrics; rather, the manager of performance assessments and Linked Learning support staff allowed a pilot group of teachers to share with one another the assessment tools that they were already using. This practice ensured that the support team treated their teachers as professionals and gave them the space to see value in the work of their colleagues at other schools, which paved the way for future success.

During the summer of 2015, teachers who chose to attend professional learning sessions on the graduate capstone were asked to agree on common assessment tools for research writing and oral presentation. They scored work of OUSD students using two rubrics—the first iterations of the common district rubrics described above, both developed in 2011 through a partnership between the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) and Envision Learning Partners. Some schools within the district were already using these rubrics, creating in-district advocates for these assessment materials. In calibration exercises, teachers experienced the scoring process and connected that work to critical learning outcomes and new thinking about instructional practices, particularly during debriefing discussions with their peers.

Through a combination of verbal and written feedback on the initial rubrics and observations gleaned from the calibration sessions, the OUSD performance assessment team finalized the district rubrics that they provided in the 2015–16 school year. The team was cautious about messaging when sharing this rubric districtwide, opting to "strongly encourage" the adoption process rather than mandating implementation. As incentive, the team shared the positive feedback from teachers who participated in the calibration sessions. Furthermore, the OUSD team continues to receive and integrate teacher feedback to improve the district's efforts in this work and better meet students' needs.

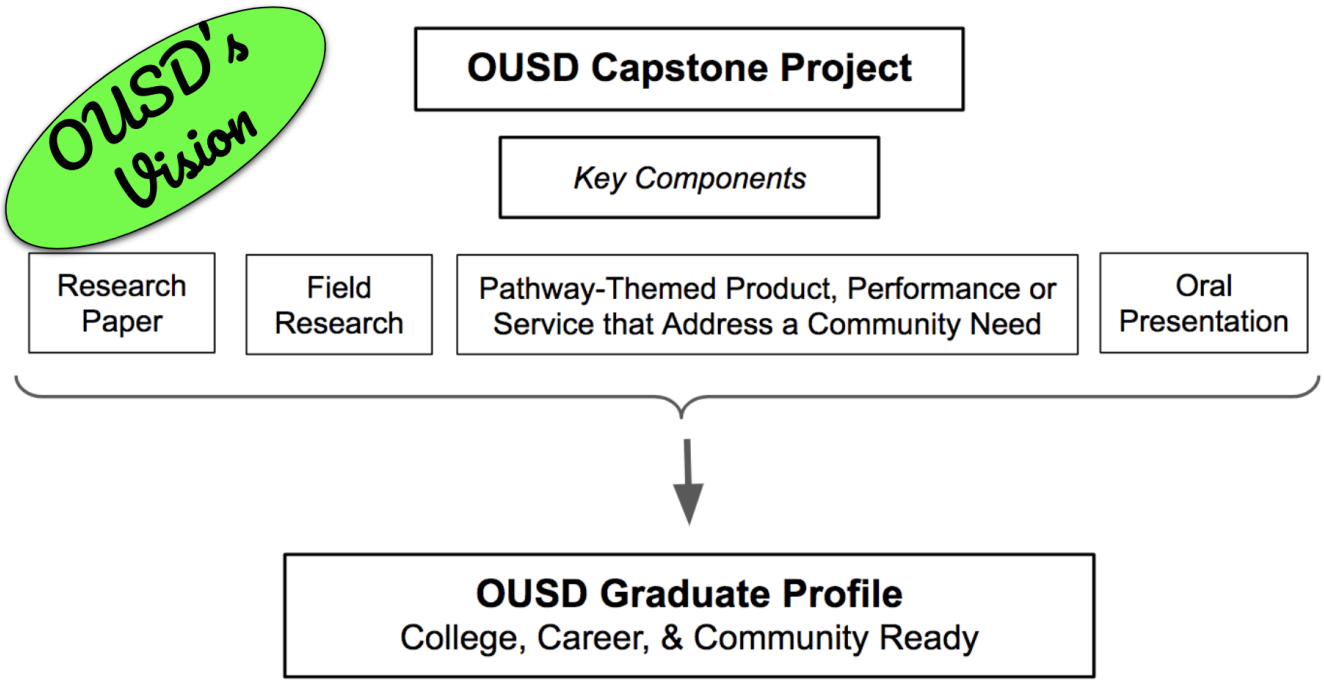
This approach has paid off. Over the past 3 years, more and more teachers have become advocates for these rubrics, bringing additional colleagues on board. Teacher attendance at professional learning sessions continues to increase each year, with teachers from 65% of pathways having attended the 2018–19 sessions, an increase of nearly 10% from the previous year. As it is not mandated, teachers attend of their own volition and are not "voluntold" to engage in these sessions. Thus, while attendance is not yet at 100%, the majority attendance and upward trajectory, along with positive teacher feedback, all indicate that the learning sessions are valuable to those attending and are growing within the district.

How the Graduate Capstone Project Works

During the 2017–18 school year, 1,373 12th graders—roughly 66% of the 2,083 OUSD seniors attending one of the 14 district-run public high schools—participated in the capstone process.[21] Those who did not complete the graduate capstone still completed a senior project as part of their learning experience, however, these students were not enrolled in a pathway that engaged in the formal graduate capstone process. The district continues to work toward all pathways being engaged in the aligned, coherent graduate capstone experience, and central office staff continue to support all pathways choosing to adopt this policy.

To complete the capstone, graduates engaged in four central steps. They: 1) defined a research question, 2) conducted literary and/or field research, 3) wrote a formal research paper, and 4) presented their process and findings. For the 2018–19 school year, a subset of seniors will also be asked to complete a project tailored to their pathway theme (such as engineering and design or environmental sciences) that addresses a community need (Figure 3).

Figure 3: OUSD Vision for the Graduate Capstone Project



Source: Meeting Slides, OUSD Professional Development, 9/11/18

The research and writing elements of the capstone project are designed to provide students with a rigorous and college-relevant learning experience. OUSD high school students begin their schooling experience with varying levels of familiarity with research skills such as asking open-ended and multitiered questions that lead to a sustained body of research, gathering survey and interview data, and assessing the credibility of sources. Some students have written longer papers in their academic careers, but many are unfamiliar with the challenges of a sustained research and writing process of this length, scope, and rigor. Frequently, the capstone oral defense, which combines rehearsed and unrehearsed presentation skills, is the most intensive presentation that graduates have engaged with in their high school careers.

Capstone teachers have flexibility in how they scaffold and implement each of the capstone components. From generating a substantial research topic to synthesizing the information into a formal research paper, much of the process relies on individual teachers' knowledge and skills about how to guide students through the capstone process.

Defining a Research Question

Students and teachers collaborate to generate research questions. Often, students' research questions are tied to issues within their community, elements within their pathway themes, or concepts they are exposed to in a summer internship. Students may come in with a topic that is either too specific or too broad, and then refine their idea through a combination of teacher and peer feedback.

Schools have different timelines and trajectories for this process. Some schools ask students to begin brainstorming at the end of their junior year, providing a list of possible topics and assigning a smaller paper derived from a body of research that students can build on during the graduate capstone requirement. Other schools have students begin brainstorming at the beginning of the senior year, inviting them to identify larger topics that they are interested in that students then describe in a letter of intent. From that letter of intent, students generate a question or series of questions that are open-ended enough that there is room for critical analysis and dialogue, but also specific enough that students can research the topic adequately in time to write the paper and present it in the spring. Some examples of past student topics include racial and socioeconomic disparities in access to health care, the impact of various forms of immigration on the economy, and the treatment of AIDS in the Muslim community, as well as the issue of e-cigarettes presented above. Topics must lend themselves to academic research that students can sustain throughout the school year. Many capstone teachers identify the importance of providing specific feedback as early in the process as possible. When feedback is prompt, students are able to conduct deeper, more engaging research.

Conducting Research

The research element of the paper is similarly adaptable to context. Ideally, students are working toward integrating "*extensive and comprehensive* evidence from various types of sources" into their papers, and they must both synthesize the ideas from these sources and indicate the credibility of the research they have found.[22] Teachers scaffold students' understanding of what constitutes extensive and comprehensive evidence in a variety of ways. Most pathways begin with research that is grounded in literature, asking students to find a certain number of credible news articles and academic sources on their topic of choice. From there, students in most schools are expected to extend their research with conducting interviews or focus groups, observing or participating in community events, distributing surveys, or engaging with other options that fit their topic. This process exposes some students to challenges with collecting data that they will continue to encounter in their undergraduate and, potentially, their graduate school experiences, such as securing confidentiality agreements and verifying personal accounts.

Many teachers keep lists of community members who are knowledgeable about a variety of subjects and refer students to interview them. These teachers often also support students in generating questions, asking for further resources, and writing thank-you notes afterward. Throughout the research process, students engage with a variety of sources and stakeholders, which provides them with practice in analyzing complex issues from multiple perspectives. As such, supporting teachers in

showing students how to identify credible sources continues to be an area of growth identified both by the central leaders in the Linked Learning office and the capstone teachers themselves. This year's professional learning series, explained in greater detail below, frames each element with the theme of multiple perspectives in an effort to push teachers' practices to better support students in engaging with source analysis and critical thinking.

Writing the Research Paper

The research paper has neither a formal page count nor formal structure, allowing for a flexibility that has supported teachers in making the process responsive to student needs. Pathways that assess their students using the district rubrics empower teachers to use both rubric domains and student needs to guide instruction.

At Fremont High School, for example, teachers revised the writing process by breaking the written product into two papers: a problem paper and a solution paper. The teacher who initiated this change said it was "one of [her] proudest moments," and that it helped her students organize their thoughts and dive deeper into each aspect of their topic. In addition, she and her pathway teaching partners scaffolded the paper by having students keep a process journal, which she framed as "the building blocks of their [problem] paper" and creating a theory of change outline, which helped them to organize their thoughts around their solution paper. This teaching team capitalized on OUSD's flexibility in implementation to mold the experience in response to their students' needs, while still assessing students along the writing rubric and holding them to high standards.

Other teachers require that students write a single, longer paper that integrates both problem and solution. Students who experienced this requirement reported that they found it exceptionally challenging, as it was both the first time they had been required to write with such rigor and because the timing of the assignments that provided necessary scaffolding coincided with essential college application deadlines. This process takes many months, and students write and receive feedback on multiple drafts of each scaffolded element of the paper as well as the final paper as a whole. The writing component is incredibly time-consuming, but it provides an essential opportunity for students to expand their exposure to the writing process, which will prepare them to write longer, more in-depth pieces in their colleges and careers.

Giving an Oral Presentation

Practices for the oral presentation, the culminating seal on the capstone experience, also vary by school site. What remains consistent across sites is that students are required to present their research, findings, and experience to a panel. This panel may consist of teachers, members of the community, peers, and sometimes family members. The presentation is expected to include a multimedia component. Some schools provide a more formal atmosphere with targeted questions, minimal back-and-forth, and a silent recording of scores. Others allow for a lively back-and-forth conversation, with open-ended questions and an oral discussion of scores. Students spend, on average, 15 minutes on their formal presentation, with the option to spend several minutes fielding questions, depending on if and how their pathway structures the feedback element. Some pathways choose to provide feedback to students later, whereas others provide immediate, in-person feedback.

Panelist selection is similarly varied. Some panels consist of two to three pathway teachers, and others include pathway teachers, non-pathway teachers, community members, site supervisors, and even parents or peers. Although the teacher panelists, who participate in districtwide calibration exercises, ultimately decide each student's score, community partners and peers provide a necessary perspective that can enhance a student's presentation. Teachers are also empowered to provide opportunities for students to take in feedback and redo their presentations if the panel determines they are substandard to the graduation requirement and the student's potential.

Scoring

OUSD currently shares two central rubrics with teachers to use in assessing student learning outcomes—one geared toward written analysis and the other toward oral presentation. During the 2017–18 school year, 17 of the 26 total pathways, nearly two thirds, used the two central district-provided rubrics to assess their students on the graduate capstone project.[23] For pathways that use the district rubric, students' oral presentations are assessed based on eight key domains of proficiency: Argument, Multiple Perspectives, Evidence & Analysis, Organization, Language Use, Use of Digital Media, Presentation Skills, and Questions and Answers (Appendix B). Each domain is scored on the same scale as the writing rubric, moving from Emerging to Advanced in terms of students' skill proficiencies.

The writing rubric features seven domains and the oral presentation rubric features eight (Figure 4).[24] Professional development supports teachers in connecting students' research and writing process to these rubrics. Aligning expectations to a common rubric supports continuity of instructional elements and can be a lever for teachers to reflect on the rigor of their instruction, as well as the level of equity provided to students.[25] Furthermore, the rubrics follow research-based best practices, consisting of a set of tasks within specified genres with well-constructed scoring rubrics and teacher-moderated scoring processes.[26] As calibration exercises with pathway teachers continue, the district aims to increase the consistency and reliability of teacher scoring on the rubrics within and across pathways.

Figure 4: Capstone Rubric Domains

Writing[27]	Oral Presentation
• Argument	• Argument
• Multiple Perspectives	• Multiple Perspectives
• Evidence	• Evidence & Analysis
• Analysis	• Organization
• Organization	• Language Use
• Language Use	• Use of Digital Media
• Source Citation	• Presentation Skills
	• Questions and Answers

Source: 2018–19 OUSD Writing, Oral Presentation, and Field Research Rubrics

Moving forward, the district is piloting the use of other rubrics. Some pathways currently use a field research rubric that was created by the senior project team at Fremont High School and is aligned with domains derived from the Graduate Profile.

All rubrics assess student readiness on a scale that moves from Emerging to Developing, then Proficient, and finally Advanced, with incremental steps in between each step on the scale (Appendix A).[28] By providing district-generated rubrics, pathways have a standard with which to align their goals—one that they can use to set student expectations throughout the year.

The district allows schools and teachers some flexibility in how they implement these rubrics. For example, OUSD does not provide suggested weights for each domain, instead encouraging schools to adapt the weighting based on their curricular goals and priorities. Pathways that emphasize critical thinking and writing in their goals for graduating students might choose to more heavily weight the "analysis" domain within the writing rubric (Figure 5), which requires students to summarize, elaborate, and synthesize ideas based on the evidence they found. Negotiating different weights for different rubric elements allows pathways to both utilize a student-centered lens and integrate the rubric into their existing context, rather than relying on a top-down policy mandate to enforce implementation.

Figure 5: OUSD Writing Rubric, Analysis Domain

Scoring Domain	No Score	Emerging	E/D	Developing	D/P	Proficient	P/A	Advanced
Analysis *What is the evidence that the student can analyze evidence?*	Element not yet present	• *Restates* information from multiple sources • Presents a *few* sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias		• *Summarizes* evidence from multiple sources related to the argument • Presents *some* sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias		• *Elaborates on the significance of* evidence from multiple sources in support of the argument • Presents *most* sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias		• Elaborates on the significance of evidence and *synthesizes ideas* from multiple sources in support of the argument • *Consistently* presents sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias

Source: 2018–19 OUSD Writing Rubric

Systems of Support

Robust and responsive systems of support are vital to both building and sustaining capacity. The OUSD graduate capstone team, composed of current and former educators, prioritizes this need and adopts a learner-centered approach in supporting teachers and students. Teacher supports are intentionally flexible yet guided, featuring a mix of explicit and inquiry-based instruction that provides teachers a solid foundation of content and also leaves room for them to adapt their instruction to students' needs. The instructional support team solicits feedback to guide how they improve upon each professional learning experience, with both students and teachers in mind.

Teacher Supports

The manager of performance assessments and the CTE coach for law and public service pathways, both OUSD district administrators, continue to organize capstone-related professional learning opportunities to be responsive to and supportive of teachers' instructional needs. As such, teachers find themselves continuously working to improve their ability to support students in completing increasingly meaningful and rigorous capstone projects. As the number of students participating in the graduate capstone grows, the district continues to build its capacity to sustain a rigorous academic program. Central to this effort is a series of districtwide professional development supports that focus on aligning instructional practices within and across pathways, which occur four times throughout the school year and for a week during the summer. Between 20 and 25 teachers, from a variety of pathways, consistently attend these sessions. These professional development sessions are vital to supporting teachers in planning and implementing rigorous instruction that will prepare students for the culminating capstone assessment. Many capstone teachers have enthusiastically engaged with the capstone project and professional development. Continuing to increase this teacher attendance and engagement requires that the manager of performance assessments and the CTE coaches provide support in these sessions that is both relevant and valuable, and that the capstone experience provides similarly relevant and valuable experience for both teachers and students.

In the first 3 years of this initiative, the professional learning was typically organized around each of the key tasks of the project. As students progressed from field research to writing, and finally to their presentation, teachers' professional development experiences would run parallel to this process. Each year, the final meeting happened 4 to 6 weeks before students across the district presented their work and teachers convened to watch students who volunteered to present their capstone project. This meeting provided the chance for teachers to calibrate on quality and make instructional adjustments to prepare their students for final presentations.

Following these 3 foundational years, the district team decided to narrow the scope of professional learning to focus on supporting teachers' instruction. They grounded each year's professional development in one scoring domain of the rubric to provide teachers with a focus when setting goals, looking at student work, and making changes to instruction. The following year, the OUSD team used teacher surveys to determine the highest leverage domain from the rubric, identifying the analysis domain for the 2017–18 school year. For the 2018–19 school year, the team decided to isolate the multiple perspectives domain, based on feedback from observing student presentations at multiple schools in the previous year.

The professional development sessions provide a venue for educators to calibrate expectations and practices for students and to facilitate conversations among teachers about pedagogy and practice. *Calibration exercises*, also called *moderation*, train teachers and assessors to score open-ended tasks reliably and according to the rubric.[29] Calibration exercises throughout the 2017–18 school year featured sample work that assessors scored against the shared rubric and discussed until they established a common understanding of expectations. Discussing expectations for student work, grounded in concrete examples, facilitates assessors' ability to fine-tune their capacity to evaluate student work and to increase their awareness of strong student performance.[30] For example, the manager of performance assessments convened a professional learning experience at the beginning of the 2018–19 school year that featured a demonstration mini lesson, shown to participating teachers and aimed at scaffolding students' ability to identify and use credible sources. After the manager of performance assessments and one of the

CTE coaches finished the demonstration mini lesson, they led a small group discussion among teacher participants about credibility, bias, and academic expectations. Both small- and whole-group discussions were lively, with one teacher noting that "bias isn't bad; it just has to be known" (in order for students to be able to assess a source's credibility and decide if and how to integrate information from biased sources into their papers). This discussion enabled teachers to fine-tune how they articulate their expectations for a credible source as well as how they evaluate students' use of these sources in an academic context. Additionally, a number of teachers reported that they found the mini lesson and discussion activity valuable enough to adapt in their classrooms to teach the same skills to their students.

Following this activity, the manager of performance assessments provided teaching teams time to leverage both the lesson and discussion to build individual and team plans to scaffold students' source evaluation skills. In this 2-hour meeting, teachers collaborated on skill-building techniques, cross-subject engagement, and curricular expectations, while also conferring on individual students' needs. The experience level in the room varied widely: Some teachers were in their first year of teaching the capstone, and others had 5 or more years of capstone work under their belts. All came together to learn from one another and used the time to align expectations for both ambitious instruction and positive outcomes for OUSD Linked Learning pathway graduates. One teacher said: "I appreciated the space, despite frequently coming in at the end of a long school day, exhausted … I still get so much important work done."

Professional learning such as this will happen three more times throughout the 2018–19 school year and once in the summer to fulfill the annual cycles of inquiry and calibration that the manager of performance assessments provides for capstone teachers. Each cycle aligns with the greater goal of improving teachers' expectations for students through reflection, dialogue, and shared learning. The performance assessments team used their own cycle of reflection and dialogue to guide their implementation of professional learning for the 2018–19 school year. They used stakeholder feedback and observations to orient these learning experiences toward best practices in conducting research and writing to address multiple perspectives on an issue.

The professional learning opportunities provided, therefore, model the learner-centered principles that are key to authentic learning experiences. These sessions are open to any teacher in the district, and teachers who do not currently teach a capstone class regularly attend. Those teachers report finding the capstone learning sessions valuable both for their individual instructional growth and for orienting their teaching practices toward the rigorous capstone expectations that their students will face in their senior year.

Student Supports

Preparation of students for the rigor of the graduate capstone project differs depending on the school, pathway, or classroom context. Organizational conditions, such as time and space to align instruction, and different exposure levels to the capstone process determine a lot of the variation. Some schools are newer to the process or have fewer opportunities for teachers to collaborate and align instruction, and therefore their student supports are not as robust as schools that have more experience with the capstone and time to create a vertically aligned system. As pathways adopt this iteration of the graduation requirement, more schools look to align instruction beginning at and beyond 9th grade so that students are prepared for the level of rigor expected of them by the time they begin their senior year.

Skyline High School's Green Energy Pathway provides one example of how teachers have used the graduate capstone project to reorganize instructional practices. Teachers in this pathway set the "advanced" graduate capstone district rubric as students' ultimate goal and align curricular elements vertically toward this outcome, beginning with the foundational research skills they teach in 9th grade. Students complete an integrated project each year, developed and taught by an interdisciplinary team of pathway teachers from chemistry, history, English, and CTE, who collaborate on both instruction and assessment. In 10th grade, students use the final 6 weeks of school to investigate and research an essential question, provided by their teacher, on a nonrenewable energy source. In 11th grade, students generate their own essential question that guides them toward creating an environmentally friendly classroom design. Students are assessed against a version of the district rubric that teachers have modified, grading 10th grade projects against the criteria for an "emerging" score in each domain and grading 11th grade projects against the criteria for a "developing" score. When pathways align expectations and practices along a vertical trajectory, as they have in Skyline's Green Energy Pathway, students are more likely to be proficient or advanced by their senior year and to have an understanding of how to be successful in completing this project prior to graduation.

In contrast to Skyline's holistic, vertical alignment, other schools find it more strategic to delineate specific classes in addition to core academic courses as spaces for students to complete this work. For example, at Fremont High School, the capstone process began as a subset of the general English curriculum before teachers advocated for it to become its own class. Although the graduate capstone utilizes key English language arts skills, such as research and analytical writing, teachers found that students' projects incorporate a variety of domains that are best supported by a robust, yearlong English language arts experience, rather than subsumed within an existing class with other learning objectives. Other schools also use existing noncore course time to support similar outcomes, allocating time in classes such as advisory for students to have a dedicated work space before big deadlines, check in with faculty supports or mentors, and practice presentations on which they receive feedback.

Students with special needs and accommodations are also given specific supports. This may involve providing these students with more research articles than other students, or requiring them to provide evidence that is lower in volume or different in scope than that of their peers. Teachers may also create more structured supports in terms of outlines, sentence starters, or even short answer prompts to scaffold elements of longer assignments. One of the capstone teachers from Fremont High School remarked that "the [special education] scaffolds you offer help everybody," as she reflected on how she modified one assignment's layout to be responsive to a student with special needs. Other students requested the modified layout and, in the following year, she implemented this modification as an option for all students and found that "the quality of writing, their clarity, was … better." Additionally, the oral presentations may look different, with students presenting to resource teachers rather than the full panel. This adoption model, in which teachers are empowered to adopt and adapt rigorous graduate capstone elements to fit individual needs rather than the district having mandated a list of programmatic requirements, allowed OUSD teachers to deliver a learner-centered capstone experience. The key caveat, however, is that teachers are most effective in doing so when they have the time, resources, and support that they need.

Funding and Technical Assistance

OUSD's graduate capstone work began to take its current form with its implementation of the Linked Learning Initiative, funded by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation. To sustain this work, the district received funding from the Hewlett Foundation and technical support provided by Envision Learning Partners in 2014. Currently, OUSD relies on additional technical assistance from Envision Learning Partners, supported by a grant from the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund and the Koshland Family Foundation, as well as the Thomas J. Long Foundation. These funding sources support high-quality implementation and scaling of performance assessments.

In addition, OUSD is engaged in a project with Los Angeles Unified, Pasadena Unified, Envision Learning Partners, ConnectEd, and the Learning Policy Institute through a grant from the Assessment for Learning Project (ALP) that aims to develop each participating district's performance assessment system. Through the grant, OUSD is receiving additional technical assistance from Envision Learning Partners and ConnectEd to support districtwide implementation of the graduate capstone, as well as funding that supports the district's professional learning series.

Benefits of the Graduate Capstone Model in OUSD

Students crave and deserve rigorous, motivating learning opportunities that prepare them to be successful in their future college, career, and community work. Teachers are constantly striving to activate lifelong student engagement and success. With the graduate capstone, students are able to access the rigor that they deserve and teachers are able to be innovative in the ways in which they serve their students. By expanding the measures of student achievement to include how students engage with rich, rigorous learning opportunities, both students and teachers benefit.

How Teachers Benefit

Teachers report that the process supports them in reflecting on and improving their practice. In fact, all teacher survey respondents who attended the districtwide capstone professional development sessions in the 2017–18 school year reported that the opportunities informed their instruction and provided valuable resources that supported their practice, with 87% and 80%, respectively, reporting that they strongly agree. One teacher reported that she appreciated how the professional development provided "strong and specific" guidance in how to scaffold layers of detail and analysis and the writing process as a whole to her students. At professional learning sessions, this is evident. Professional learning sessions feature teachers actively highlighting and annotating readings, debating both pedagogy and content, and listening to learn from one another.

Research suggests that teaching with performance assessments provides teachers with the information to effectively shift their own instruction and meet the specific learning needs of their students.[31] Additionally, performance assessments such as the portfolio/defense model give teachers the opportunity to collect more useful data on student learning. Research demonstrates that having such rich feedback on how their students think better equips teachers to assess areas of strength and improvement in their own practice.[32] At one session, teachers used the independent work time to calibrate their expectations

on research questions, discussing methods to reach students who were having behavior challenges or trouble isolating an appropriately scaled research question, as well as sharing information on members of the community who have been solid resources for interviews in years prior.

Ultimately, providing this space for reflection can also support teachers in digging deeper into their own beliefs, assumptions, and practices in the classroom, which enables them to create learning opportunities that provide both rigor and motivation. One debate on assumptions, biases, and credibility resulted in a teacher remarking, "What we were criticizing [one article] for exists [in another article that teachers identified as unbiased] … but we trust this institution and so we don't question where it comes from." Pushing teachers to have deep, meaningful conversations about both content and process allows them to continuously improve how they serve their students, and it is one of the motivating factors that drives greater participation.

Teacher participation continues to grow as more students are exposed to the capstone project, increasing by roughly 40% from the 2016–17 school year to the 2017–18 school year. Additionally, the number of teachers interested in aligning various levels of instruction with capstone goals is growing, with multiple teachers who are not assigned to teach capstone classes choosing to attend the professional learning sessions offered by the district in September 2018. One teacher reflected that he chose to attend despite not being officially affiliated with any capstone work because he heard that the work they were doing was interesting and he "wanted to check it out." The goal of 80% OUSD senior participation in the culminating capstone by the 2018–19 school year further increases the impetus for educators to engage in ambitious instructional goals and the calibration-based professional development opportunities the district offers. Continued high-quality professional development can continue to sustain high-quality instruction and authentic skill acquisition.

How Students Benefit

Of the 1,373 seniors who participated in the graduate capstone project in the 2017–18 school year, 48% responded to survey questions about their experience. Those surveyed reported that the graduate capstone process was valuable to their academic growth. In particular, more than 80% of respondents felt that it strengthened their skills as a researcher, writer, and oral presenter, as well as strengthening their ability to be proactive in their learning. In focus groups, students reflected that the requirements of the graduate capstone project highlighted skills that they wish they had been exposed to much earlier in their high school careers. Students felt that engaging with "writing, researching, public speaking … essential skills" that explicitly connect to their future academic and professional needs was a powerful experience. One student said that "[the capstone project] increased my knowledge specifically on this topic, and also my skills in writing and presenting in front of other people, and my communication skills overall."

Students who engaged in even the earliest iterations of this learning experience reported a sense of accomplishment, as well as one of confidence. This experience helped them develop academic and social-emotional skills that will serve them well beyond high school graduation. One student reported, "For a period of time … I gave up, because I was just too overwhelmed with English [class], to government, to this class. I regret that. But the thing I won't forget is how I came back from that. Like how I passed my next paper. From there on, I got myself together." The capstone provides an opportunity for students to develop both academic skills and habits of mind that can be applied to future experiences. Students learn to manage stress, persevere beyond their comfort zone, and learn how to maintain and strengthen relationships, all of which are skills that will serve them beyond high school.

One student reflected, "All the skills that we actually pick up from doing a capstone project-like process [are] very deep … Writing, researching, public speaking, all those essential skills are actually helpful for us in the future."

Students also reported that the process helped them develop essential skills beyond writing, research, and presentation. One student reflected on the role of networking in the process, noting that "[the process] taught a lot of people how to network, because we have to reach out to all these other organizations and when we do reach out, a lot of good things can come from that, like we can definitely network." Networking requires many of the 21st century skills that students will need to employ in their postgraduate lives, such as communication, collaboration, and self-direction. It also involves flexibility and adaptability. One student described this aspect of the process as the "hardest part … because every organization that I tried to email or call to get an interview from somebody, nobody would hit me back." By practicing this skill with the oversight of a teacher, students can prepare for this experience, adapt to rejection or evasion, and then reflect and connect this experience with their future needs.

Students also had agency and choice to focus on topics that they found meaningful and interesting through this process. One student stated, "My family, as an immigrant family, has struggled receiving and having access to health care. Also, lots of people in my community have that same issue. It was a topic I wanted to bring awareness to because it has limited cultural sensitivity. A lot of people don't know there's this issue in the community, specifically this community." Another student shared, "I was able to do it on a topic that I am passionate about. I have a connection with animals … I was able to reach out to an organization, East Bay SPCA, and I was able to volunteer and help them out because they are short on staff and they need people to help them out." Motivation is a key factor in a project that students describe as "a stressful experience, but a great experience." Incorporating both skills and topics that students find authentic and immediately useful into a comprehensive, extended learning opportunity supports students in pushing their conceptions of what they think they can do. As one student expertly summed it up, "finding my strengths and weaknesses as a student [was memorable] because this project really pushes you to do [that]."

Finally, teachers recognize how this process shapes both student and teacher perceptions of learning. One teacher who has taught in OUSD for 20 years reported that, in the years that OUSD has engaged in this reimagined capstone, she has seen it "change our kids." She says, "They know how to interview, they know how to engage with the skills they need" to be successful beyond the classroom. She also shared that it has changed her as a teacher. She sees "students who have given up come alive when they have CTE skills built into their academic learning process, and when they see how successful they are, leaders emerge." Because of her experience working with students who have re-engaged with school when they connect their internship, their capstone experience, and their academic learning, she has changed her goal as a teacher. This year, her professional learning goal is to pay more attention to students who are often ignored, to try to build more trust with them, and to more meaningfully to support them in coming back to the classroom. Before this experience, she said, she might not have thought that this type of re-engagement was possible; however, she has been inspired to adapt her practice to focus specifically on the most disengaged students. Both teacher and student learning rely on authentic experiences, reflection, and application. The capstone allowed both teacher and student to reframe their role in the learning process and reflect on the areas in which each of them can grow.

Next Steps

In the district's first professional learning session of the 2018–19 school year on the graduate capstone project, teachers shared many individual areas of focus for the work ahead. Some emphasized developing even more rigorous tasks that will prepare students for postgraduate work, others highlighted deepening the feedback that students receive, and still others prioritized connecting beyond grade-level and subject-area silos that emerge from the pressures and constraints of the school schedule. All teachers, however, expressed confidence in student ability to engage in critical thinking, sustained engagement, and authentic skills that will serve them beyond the high school classroom when they are provided with both the resources and opportunities to do so, as in the graduate capstone course.

Due to the district's flexible approach to capstone implementation, alignment continues to be an area that the team looks to strengthen. The team is piloting an initiative in six middle schools this year to align instruction vertically, so that students have a strong foundation for this work when they enter high school. They are also supporting high school leaders individually to both understand structures that support implementation and to strategize next steps around implementation. In addition to these newer initiatives, the district team continues to strengthen practices at the teacher level through calibration exercises and instructional support. In the 2017–18 school year, external observers noted that students' understanding of key research skills, such as identifying credible sources and collecting original data, exists on a continuum. Students' understanding is dependent upon their foundational knowledge base, their teachers' understanding, and their teachers' ability to scaffold students' acquisition of these skills appropriately. Responding to this need, the manager of performance assessments has dedicated 25% of the 2018–19 professional development sessions toward source evaluation, framed within the yearlong professional learning theme of considering multiple perspectives. As the capstone continues to grow in scope and reach, he plans to align district resources toward calibrating teachers' expectations for both processes and products.

In 2018–19, the district is also implementing a learning innovation pilot with a subset of the capstone teachers. This pilot is an extension of the existing capstone that will support teaching teams in integrating their pathway theme into a culminating community-based capstone project, in addition to the writing and oral presentation requirements. This element rounds out the capstone project to focus on the "community-ready" aspect of the OUSD mission and Graduate Profile. Two pathways piloted this project in the 2017–18 school year, and their students created community-based action research projects that aligned with their capstone topics. Teachers found it to be an extremely positive experience and want to continue to have students connect with the community and measure the impact of their action projects. Eleven pathway teams have received mini grants to work on this type of innovation, and they are working to coordinate action plans for implementing this pilot. These teams will meet a few times throughout the year to brainstorm, plan, and create a set of teacher- and student-facing materials that document the work, are linked to the pathway program of study, and will support students in successfully completing the project. All of these teams receive coaching support coordinated through the Linked Learning office.

At the first professional learning opportunity of the 2018–19 school year, the manager of performance assessments framed the district's previous process as "without a top-down mandate … driven by teachers [who were] honored with the time and space to do the work." Building on this foundation of practice, he hopes to move forward with a policy that will build on and validate the existing work. He contrasted the

idea of a unifying capstone project that aligns instruction toward high standards and college-, career-, and community-ready outcomes with the often siloed nature of classroom instruction, which distributes opportunities to "certain kinds" of students, leaving others out. All students, he reminded them, deserve access to opportunity. This is what OUSD wants itself to become: a district in which knowledge is open, relevant, and valued, and one in which teachers collaborate freely, with students' needs at the forefront. The senior capstone project provides a way to align all learning toward this culminating goal, foregrounding equitable, connected, authentic learning as the foundation for OUSD students' continued growth and success.

Appendix A

2018–19 Graduate Capstone Research Writing

NOTE: When using this rubric, the in-between categories (i.e., "E/D") are meant for work that falls between the other categories either as a matter of degree or as a matter of satisfying only some of the required criteria within that domain.

NOTE: Please consider weighting the various domains based on relative importance. For example, "Cites Sources" might be weighted as only 5% of the total score as opposed to "Argument," which might merit 15% or 20%.

Scoring Domain	No Score	Emerging	E/D	Developing	D/P	Proficient	P/A	Advanced
Argument *What is the evidence that the student can develop an argument?*	Element not yet present	• *Has a general* argument • Explains a *little* background and context of topic/issue • Draws *superficial* connections or conclusions		• *Makes* an argument and *develops* it in the paper • Explains *some* background and context of topic/issue • Draws *general or broad* connections or conclusions		• Makes a clear *and well-developed* argument/thesis • Explains background and context of topic/issue • Makes *specific* connections and draws meaningful conclusions		• Makes a clear, well-developed, and *convincing* argument/thesis • *Thoroughly* explains background and context of topic/issue • Makes *insightful* connections, draws meaningful conclusions, and *raises important implications*
Multiple Perspectives *What is the evidence that the student considers other perspectives?*	Element not yet present	• *Mentions* questions or alternative interpretations		• *Acknowledges and briefly responds* to questions or alternative interpretations when appropriate		• Acknowledges and responds to questions or alternative interpretations when appropriate		• Acknowledges and responds to questions or alternative interpretations to *explore the complexity of the topic* when appropriate
Evidence *What is the evidence that the student can support the argument?*	Element not yet present	• Refers to *at least one* piece of evidence relevant to the argument		• Refers to *some* evidence relevant to argument/thesis		• Refers to *sufficient* and *detailed* evidence from various types of sources, which are relevant to argument/thesis		• Refers to *extensive* and *comprehensive* evidence from various types of sources, which are relevant to argument/thesis
Analysis *What is the evidence that the student can analyze evidence?*	Element not yet present	• *Restates* information from multiple sources • Presents a *few* sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias		• *Summarizes* evidence from multiple sources related to the argument • Presents *some* sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias		• *Elaborates on the significance of* evidence from multiple sources in support of the argument • Presents *most* sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias		• Elaborates on the significance of evidence and *synthesizes ideas* from multiple sources in support of the argument • Consistently presents sources in a way that shows consideration of relevance, credibility, or potential bias
Organization *What is the evidence that the student can organize and structure ideas for effective communication?*	Element not yet present	• A *few* ideas are logically sequenced • A *few* transitions are used		• *Some* ideas are logically sequenced • *Some* transitions connect ideas		• Ideas are logically sequenced • Transitions connect ideas		• Ideas are logically sequenced to *present a coherent whole* • Transitions *guide* the reader through the development of the argument

Scoring Domain	No Score	Emerging	E/D	Developing	D/P	Proficient	P/A	Advanced
Language Use *What is the evidence that the student can use language skillfully to communicate ideas?*	Element not yet present	• Has *some* control of syntax and vocabulary • Language and tone are *somewhat* appropriate to the purpose and audience • Grammar, usage, and mechanics are *somewhat* accurate		• Has control of syntax and vocabulary • Language and tone are *mostly* appropriate to the purpose and audience • Grammar, usage, and mechanics are *mostly* accurate		• Demonstrates *varied* syntax and *effective* word choice; *uses rhetorical techniques* • Language and tone are appropriate to the purpose and audience • Grammar, usage, and mechanics are *accurate*		• Has a *fluent* style with varied syntax, precise word choice, and *skillful* use of rhetorical techniques • Language and tone are *tailored* to the purpose and audience • Grammar, usage, and mechanics are *free from error*
Cites Sources *What is the evidence that the student can cite sources appropriately?*	Element not yet present	• A *few* in-text citations and/or elements of the works cited page are accurate		• *Some* in-text citations and elements of the works cited page are accurate		• In-text citation and works cited page are mostly accurate		• In-text citation and works cited page are accurate

Modified from 2011 Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, & Equity (SCALE) and the Envision Schools last updated: June 12, 2018

Appendix B

2018–19 Graduate Capstone Oral Presentation

NOTE: When using this rubric, the in-between categories (i.e., "E/D") are meant for work that falls between the other categories either as a matter of degree or as a matter of satisfying only some of the required criteria within that domain.

NOTE: Please consider weighting the various domains based on relative importance.

Scoring Domain	No Score	Emerging	E/D	Developing	D/P	Proficient	P/A	Advanced
Argument *What is the evidence that the student can present a clear argument and line of reasoning?*	Element not yet present	• *Has* a *general* argument • Explains *a little* background and context of topic/issue • Draws *superficial* connections or conclusions		• *Makes* an argument and *develops it* • Explains *some* background and context of topic/issue • Draws *general* or *broad* connections or conclusions		• Makes a clear *and well-developed* argument/thesis • Explains background and context of topic/issue for the intended audience • Makes *specific* connections and draws *meaningful* conclusions		• Makes a clear, well-developed, and *convincing* argument/thesis • *Thoroughly* explains background and context of topic/issue for the intended audience • Makes *insightful* connections, draws meaningful conclusions, and *raises important implications*
Multiple Perspectives *What is the evidence that the student considers other perspectives?*	Element not yet present	• *Mentions* questions or alternative interpretations		• *Acknowledges and briefly responds* to questions or alternative interpretations *when appropriate*		• *Acknowledges and responds to* questions or alternative interpretations when appropriate		• Acknowledges and responds to questions or alternative interpretations *to explore the complexity of the topic* when appropriate
Evidence & Analysis *What is the evidence that the student can support an argument with relevant evidence?*	Element not yet present	• *Restates or refers* to facts, experience, or research to support the argument		• *Summarizes* relevant facts, experience, and/or research to support the argument		• *Elaborates* on *sufficient* and relevant facts, experiences, and research to support the argument		• Elaborates on *extensive* and relevant facts, experience and research; *synthesizes ideas* from multiple sources to support the argument
Organization *What is the evidence that the student can organize a presentation in a way that supports the audience's understanding?*	Element not yet present	• *A few* ideas are logically sequenced • *A few* transitions are used		• *Some* ideas are logically sequenced • *Some* transitions connect ideas		• Ideas are logically sequenced • Transitions *connect* ideas		• Ideas are logically sequenced to *present a coherent whole* • Transitions *guide* the audience through the *development of the argument*
Language Use *What is the evidence that the student can use language appropriately and fluidly to support audience understanding?*	Element not yet present	• Uses language and style that is *somewhat suited* to the purpose, audience, and task • Speaking is *somewhat* fluid		• Uses language and style that is *mostly suited* to the purpose, audience, and task • Speaking is *mostly* fluid		• Uses language and style that is *suited* to the purpose, audience, and task • Speaking is fluid and *easy to follow*		• Uses *sophisticated and varied* language that is suited to the purpose, audience, and task • Speaking is *consistently* fluid and easy to follow

Scoring Domain	No Score	Emerging	E/D	Developing	D/P	Proficient	P/A	Advanced
Use of Digital Media *What is the evidence that the student can use digital media/ visual displays to engage and support audience understanding?*	Element not yet present	• Digital media or visual displays are *somewhat* informative and relevant		• Digital media or visual displays are *mostly* informative and relevant		• Digital media or visual displays are *appealing*, informative, and *support audience engagement and understanding*		• Digital media or visual displays are *polished*, informative, and support audience engagement and understanding
Presentation Skills *What is the evidence that the student can control and use appropriate body language and speaking skills to support audience engagement?*	Element not yet present	• Demonstrates *some* of the following presentation skills: control of body posture and gestures, language fluency, eye contact, clear and audible voice, and appropriate pacing		• Demonstrates *most* of the following presentation skills: control of body posture and gestures, language fluency, eye contact, clear and audible voice, and appropriate pacing		• Demonstrates *all* of the following presentation skills: control of body posture and gestures, eye contact, clear and audible voice, and appropriate pacing		• Demonstrates *command* of all of the following presentation skills: control of body posture and gestures, eye contact, clear and audible voice, and appropriate pacing *in a way that keeps the audience engaged*
Questions and Answers *What is the evidence that the student can respond to audience questions effectively?*	Element not yet present	• Provides a direct response to *some* questions; demonstrates a *somewhat* adequate command of the facts or understanding of the topic		• Provides a direct response to *most* questions, *using evidence when appropriate*; demonstrates a *mostly* adequate command of the facts and understanding of the topic		• Provides a direct response to *all* questions, using evidence when appropriate; demonstrates an *adequate* command of the facts and understanding of the topic		• Provides a direct response to *all* questions, *persuasively* using evidence when appropriate; demonstrates an *in-depth* command of the facts and understanding of the topic

Modified from the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, & Equity (SCALE) ©2012 last updated June 12, 2018

Appendix C

2018–19 Graduate Capstone – Field Research Rubric (Survey, Interview, Focus Group)

NOTE: When using this rubric, the in-between categories (i.e., "E/D") are meant for work that falls between the other categories either as a matter of degree or as a matter of satisfying only some of the required criteria within that domain.

NOTE: Please consider weighting the various domains based on relative importance. For example, "Introduction" might be weighted as only 5% of the total score as opposed to "Questions," which might merit 20%.

Scoring Domain	No Score	Emerging	E/D	Developing	D/P	Proficient	P/A	Advanced
Introduction	Element not yet present	• Introduction *vaguely* states the intended respondents • Purpose of research is *vaguely* stated		• Introduction *somewhat* clearly states the intended respondents • Purpose of research is *somewhat* clearly stated		• Introduction *clearly* states the intended respondents • Purpose of research is *clearly* stated		• Introduction clearly *and precisely* states the intended respondents • Purpose of research is clearly *and precisely* stated
Bias	Element not yet present	• A *few* questions and choices are written to allow respondents to answer honestly and without leading them to certain answers		• *Introduction and some* questions and choices are written to allow respondents to answer honestly and without leading them to certain answers		• Introduction and *most* questions and choices are written to allow respondents to answer honestly and without leading them to certain answers		• Introduction and *all* questions and choices are written to allow respondents to answer honestly and without leading them to certain answers
Questions (Students should make intentional choice of open and/ or close-ended questions, but are not required to do both)	Element not yet present	• A *few* close-ended questions provide clear and logical choices, options, or scaled responses • A *few* open-ended questions allow respondents to answer freely and in depth on the intended topic • A *few* questions are asked in a logical sequence		• *Some* close-ended questions provide clear and logical choices, options, or scaled responses • *Some* open-ended questions allow respondents to answer freely and in depth on the intended topic • *Some* questions are asked in a logical sequence		• *Most* close-ended questions provide clear and logical choices, options, or scaled responses • *Most* open-ended questions allow respondents to answer freely and in depth on the intended topic • *Most* questions are asked in a logical sequence		• *All* close-ended questions provide clear and logical choices, options, or scaled responses • *All* open-ended questions allow respondents to answer freely and in depth on the intended topic • *All* questions are asked in a logical sequence
Relevance	Element not yet present	• A *few* questions relate clearly to the research thesis		• *Some* questions relate to the research thesis		• *Most* questions relate clearly and *some* are of key importance to the research thesis		• *All* questions relate clearly, and *most* are of key importance to the research thesis
Language and Conventions	Element not yet present	• The writer expresses a *few* of the questions in a clear and accessible manner for the intended audience • There are a *few* instances of correct grammar, usage, and mechanics		• The writer expresses *some* of the questions in a clear and accessible manner for the intended audience • There are *some* instances of correct grammar, usage, and mechanics		• The writer expresses *most* of the questions in a clear and accessible manner for the intended audience • There are *many* instances of correct grammar, usage, and mechanics		• The writer expresses *all* of the questions in a clear and accessible manner for the intended audience • Nearly the entire document has correct grammar, usage, and mechanics

Scoring Domain	No Score	Emerging	E/D	Developing	D/P	Proficient	P/A	Advanced
To be assessed after implementation of field research (though students should consider these domains prior to doing their field research):								
Respondents	Element not yet present	• Respondents have a *low* likelihood of sharing responses that are relevant to the research purpose		• Respondents have *some* likelihood of sharing responses that are relevant to the research purpose		• Respondents have a *high* likelihood of sharing responses that are relevant to the research purpose		• Respondents are *almost certain to give* responses that are relevant to the research purpose
Multiple Constituents (survey only)	Element not yet present	• Survey makes some attempt to seek responses from multiple constituents in order to assess variation across different demographics		• Survey seeks responses from multiple constituents in order to assess variation across different demographics that are *somewhat* relevant to the research topic		• Survey seeks responses from multiple constituents in order to assess variation across different demographics that are *mostly* relevant to the research topic		• Survey seeks responses from multiple constituents in order to assess variation across different demographics that are *clearly* relevant to the research topic

 last updated: June 12, 2018

Example Script:
[Survey Administrator name] would like to invite you to participate in a survey about [briefly describe the purpose of your research]. You are invited to participate because [describe the rationale for the audience that was chosen for the survey].

Please read this consent agreement carefully before agreeing to participate.

What you will do in this study:
Your participation consists of taking a brief [choose: online or in-person] survey.

Risks:
No risks are anticipated.

Benefits:
No benefits are anticipated.

Confidentiality:
The information we collect from you will be confidential. Your name will not be connected to your research data in any way.

The research findings may be published, presented publicly, or used in future research. Such publications or presentations may quote you directly, but you will not be identified.

Participation and withdrawal:
Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. No questions will be asked.

Endnotes

1. Name changed to protect the confidentiality of the student.
2. Sources for this profile include observations of student defenses and professional development, interviews with district administrators and school staff, student focus groups, and document review conducted during the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years.
3. Oakland Unified School District. (2018). *Fast Facts – 2017–18*. Oakland, CA: Oakland Unified School District, Office of Research, Assessment & Data.
4. Oakland Unified School District. (2018). *Fast Facts – 2017–18*. Oakland, CA: Oakland Unified School District, Office of Research, Assessment & Data; Dataquest reports, 2017–2018, from California Department of Education.
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