

Northwest Prep Charter School

**Portfolio
Defense
Handbook**

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Introduction - A Very Rough Sketch

The Portfolio Defense

Your Portfolio Defense at Northwest Prep will consist of two parts: a curated portfolio of your work *and* a performance in which you prove to a small panel of invested individuals that you are prepared for what comes next in your education. All 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students compile and defend portfolios before moving to the next grade. But the Portfolio Defense serves as more than a strategic hurdle. The process of creating your portfolio is designed to develop in you a specific habit of mind: one that uses reflection as a means toward personal and academic growth.

Every year at NWP (even in 7th, 9th and 11th grades) you will work toward the creation of your portfolio. As you prepare to defend your portfolio you will engage in a process of evaluating and analyzing your growth by examining samples of your work. Putting together a powerful Portfolio Defense is hard work, but it's work that feels good to accomplish. It is work that makes you and the people who care about you incredibly proud. It is also work that prepares you for many experiences you will encounter as adults.

As "real world" as the Portfolio Defense sounds, it is different in one important respect: the teachers promise to have your back. The teachers are your support network. If you don't pass your first defense your teachers will tell you why and let you know what needs to change before your next attempt. NWP teachers see it as their job to ensure you have all the tools and knowledge to pass your Portfolio Defense. They cannot do the work for you, but they can give the feedback and support to ensure you succeed.

The Handbook

This handbook is intended to be used as a reference. Over the course of your six years here it is possible you will read every bit of it, but it's highly unlikely. Like every reference book this document is intended to serve a variety of purposes. By turns it may help answer specific questions, or may provide a broad overview. Use it as needed. The intended users of this handbook are students, parents or guardians, teachers, and any other individuals seeking information on Northwest Prep's system for Portfolio Defense.

Part 1 - A Profile: The NWP Graduate

What is expected of a Northwest Prep Graduate?

Upon completing six years of study at Northwest Prep Charter School you will be uniquely prepared for life beyond high school. Not only have you acquired the content that will prepare you for college and beyond, you will have done so in a way that sets you apart on many fronts. In the six years leading to graduation you will have engaged in the process of authentic inquiry; you will have learned collaboratively and deeply; you will have utilized your individual and collective student voices to affect change; and you will have explored your own dynamic role in the wide and ever-changing world that awaits. Upon graduating from NWP you will have become an expert at navigating between the three modes of doing--Observe, Think, and Act--moving nimbly between each mode with intention and purpose. As graduates you will have also achieved a level of mastery over the school's seven Leadership Skills. You will emerge with an unusual fusion of content knowledge, mindfulness, and real-world competencies that make you unusually prepared to cut a path of your own design, shaped by your own wisdom, your intelligence, and your capacity to imagine.

Three modes of doing: **Observe** → **Think** → **Act**

At Northwest Prep we recognize three “modes of doing” that overlay a student’s intricate and variable process of learning and growing. The modes of doing--Observe, Think and Act-- are cyclical, and can be applied or recognized across an infinite spectrum of scales from the most minute and isolated event, to the most broad and widespread event. Developing a consciousness and a facility with these three modes takes time and practice. As you approach mastery over the three modes of doing you will gain the capacity to distinguish between them, even while actively engaging in them. As you move closer to mastery you will consider which mode best applies to a given situation, and you will confidently work within it or through it with awareness, intent, and agility. You will demonstrate the capacity to discuss the relationships between the three modes of doing, attributing specific examples to each mode in a given set of undertakings.

Observe: In the Observe mode you gather information, notice patterns, identify behaviors, recognize ideas, and survey situations. This mode of data collection is marked by a withholding of judgement; rather than evaluating, you are collecting and storing incoming details, facts, statements, and opinions.

Think: In the Think mode you begin to process the information you have gathered and stored. The Think mode involves your critical faculties. You begin to interpret, question, reflect, and converse. Here the data or input from the Observe mode is processed, organized, and analyzed. It is subject to challenges or tests as a means to more deeply understand it, or as a means to dispute it, or reinterpret its meaning. In the Think mode

you engage your capacity for inquiry and wonder. At times you move directly from this Think mode back to the Observe mode. Other times you will move directly to Act.

Act: In the Act mode you make change. You carry out the constructing of an idea, an artifact, a tool, or a work of media. You perform or create or repurpose. The Act mode comes about as a direct response to the work done in previous modes: it is inspired by, informed by, and calculated from the information in the Observe and Think modes of doing. In the Act mode you apply your knowledge and skills to create something that did not previously exist.

NWP Leadership Skills:

While the three modes of doing, by their nature, make up the vast majority of all “doing” at NWP, they are in fact only one dimension of your broader capabilities. Another dimension, existing at a more focused level, is Northwest Prep’s set of seven Leadership Skills. These Leadership Skills make up the set of competencies that NWP staff have identified as essential pillars of a 21st century education. As such, they play a key role in the design of all learning opportunities at the school. This level of deep integration results a body of students who continually hone their capacity for 21st century learning. As a result, by graduation you are expected to approach a level of mastery over all seven skills*.

Personal Integrity:

Students handle themselves with confidence and act with honesty and courage. They commit to their developing beliefs and are willing to assume roles as inquiring observers, active participants, and dynamic leaders. They demonstrate positive working relationships across diverse groups, accept personal responsibility for their actions, and remain open to learning from the feedback and guidance of others.

Productive Collaboration:

Students develop and use the skills necessary to plan and engage in group projects. They work to resolve social and logistical conflicts and devise solutions to meet diverse needs. They collectively set goals and develop strategies to meet those goals. They evaluate the effectiveness of their approach and constructively adapt to new understandings as they arise.

Critical and Creative Thinking:

Students identify problems and pursue opportunities from multiple perspectives. They locate, organize, analyze, and apply key information in inventive and imaginative ways. They design, evaluate, and employ a variety of strategies, tools, and skills to achieve innovative results. Students are independent, creative, and critical thinkers who question and connect to the world around them from both big picture and focused perspectives.

Effective Communication:

Students understand and practice effective communication using verbal and nonverbal language with intent, awareness, and accuracy. They are empathetic, emotionally intelligent, persuasive, and articulate. They are skillful self-advocates who effectively communicate their needs. Students internalize and present their understandings and ideas with confidence and clarity. Employing a variety of media, they use practical, academic, and artistic abilities to convey meaning in a clear and engaging fashion.

Reflective Learning:

Students excel at making critical observations about their own learning and potential. They formulate meaningful and relevant questions that inspire and encourage further inquiry. Students consistently take charge of their education by reflecting upon and revising their own practices.

Citizenship and Global Responsibility:

Students are engaged and informed citizens. They are empowered to create positive change in themselves, their communities, and the world. They are mindful and principled decision makers who understand the long and short-term effects of their actions on others and the environment. They practice compassionate, ethical, and active citizenship in local, global, and virtual settings. Students strive to achieve balance between their own needs and the needs of others.

Resiliency and Drive:

Students are adept at taking intelligent risks and view mistakes as necessary steps toward learning and growth. They consciously identify their intentions and desires. They possess the tenacity and determination to work individually and collaboratively. They are self-motivated and self-regulated. Northwest Prep students confront challenges and persevere through adversity.

*A simplified version of these Leadership Skills is available in Appendix A.

Academic Content Standards:

Just as the three modes of doing overlay the seven NWP Leadership Skills, so do the leadership skills overlay the academic content standards that are at the heart of our curricula. This academic content, laid out in the NWP Six Year Plan (description and link in Appendix B), is the stuff of the of the everyday. It is the medium with which you construct, shape, and reshape your educational pathways. Similarly, this academic content is the medium with which NWP staff design all learning opportunities. So while this handbook focuses on the outermost layers of what the Northwest Prep graduate will walk away with, your mastery of those overlaying aptitudes and skills are founded upon agreed upon core academic content standards. Throughout each project you demonstrate your competence with these content standards in your continual process researching, enquiring, analyzing and expressing.

Part 2 - Overview: What is the Portfolio Defense?

What is the structure of the portfolio and its defense?

The Portfolio Defense consists of two parts: the portfolio and the defense. Between these two parts you will demonstrate your personal growth in, and mastery of the NWP Leadership Skills, the three modes of doing, and the academic content standards. To accomplish this you will present select samples of your work, and provide analysis of those samples, ultimately persuading your audience that you are well prepared for the next stage of your education.

A complete Portfolio Defense includes both a set of prepared documents (the portfolio) and a live presentation (the defense). Eighth graders will demonstrate their readiness to move to high school; 10th graders will show their readiness to move to the upper grades; and 12th graders will prove their readiness to enter the post-high school world with independence and fortitude. Each of the three Portfolio Defenses mark a high stakes and commendable milestone in your educational path at Northwest Prep.

The Portfolio:

The portfolio itself is an organized collection of reflective writings, work samples, and focused analyses. Collectively the portfolio serves as a tool to prove you: 1) are able to move nimbly between the three modes of doing: Observe, Think, and Act.; 2) are progressing toward mastery of the NWP Leadership Skills; and 3) can effectively integrate these aptitudes into your daily work with academic content. The portfolio should stand on its own as a persuasive body of evidence, but should also work in tandem with your live defense. You can think of your portfolio as the cover letter, job application, and resume, where as your defense is the actual job interview. See the chart below to determine which six items you will need to prepare in order to complete your portfolio. Detailed descriptions of these elements are provided in Part 3 of this handbook (under “The What”).

What items will you need in your portfolio?

Elements of the Portfolio	Introductory Document	Record of Professional Exploration	Exemplar A with written defense	Exemplar B with written defense	Exemplar C with written defense	Closing Document
8th	Personal Insight Question response (1)	List of interests and strengths	Exemplar A with reflective analysis (1 LS)	Exemplar B with reflective analysis (1 LS)	Exemplar C with reflective analysis (1 LS)	Goal for 9th grade year
10th	Personal Insight Question responses (2)	Job shadow “resume” with reflections	Exemplar A with reflective analysis (1-2 LS)	Exemplar B with reflective analysis (1-2 LS)	Exemplar C with reflective analysis (1-2 LS)	Statement of academic focus for grades 11-12
12th	Personal Insight Question responses (4)	Resume with internships	Exemplar A with reflective analysis (2-3 LS)	Exemplar B with reflective analysis (2-3 LS)	Exemplar C with reflective analysis (2-3 LS)	Ten Years Statement

The Defense:

If the portfolio constitutes your cover letter, job application, and resume, the defense is the job interview. The defense is your chance to argue your case in real time, to a real audience. This performance defense can make or break your chances of passing. In other words, a stellar portfolio is not enough; you must also demonstrate your personal and academic growth live, and to a discerning audience. When you present your defense your goal is to convince the entire panel (not just your Crossroads teacher) of your personal and academic readiness to move to the next stage of your education.

Your defense presentation will be built around the content in your portfolio, but its success depends on more than the power harnessed within those documents. Your success depends on your ability to synthesize ideas and then convey them with clarity and conviction in an extemporaneous and professional manner.

Many students choose to use a slideshow as a visual aid to their presentation. Remember, slides are essentially a tool to help you focus your audience's attention on key content. Prioritize. See "Slideshow Guidelines" in Appendix C).

Effectively preparing for your presentation, something no teacher can force upon you, will be key to your success. Your Crossroads teacher is there to support you, but ultimately your level of preparedness is in your hands. If you need more assistance than is offered in Spotblocks and Crossroads class, it is your job to communicate those needs to your Crossroads teacher, and ultimately to negotiate a workable plan for your success.

Structure of a Defense Presentation:

1. Opening remarks
2. Exemplar A*
3. Exemplar B
4. Exemplar C
5. Closing Remarks
6. Panel deliberations
7. Feedback and decision

*For each exemplar A, B, and C the presenter should follow the trajectory below:

Introduce → contextualize → discuss from Obs-Thk-Act perspective → focus on Leadership Skill applications → Q&A with panel → segue/wrap-up

Part 3 - Details: The Nuts, Bolts and Wrenches

While Part 2 served as an introduction to the Portfolio Defense, laying out the philosophy behind its design, this section you will lay out the technical details you'll need for constructing an effective Portfolio Defense. What follows likely includes too much detail to take in and make sense of in one sitting. It is designed to be a reference for you to access as needed when question arise. It includes three sections: The What; The How; and The Who, When, and Where.

The What: Anatomy of a Portfolio

The portfolio itself is made up of 5 elements, in this order: 1) Cover Sheet, 2) Introductory Document, 3) Record of Career Exploration, 4) Exemplars with Analysis, and 5) Closing Documents. The specifics for each document vary by grade level. Detailed descriptions of each document, with grade level details, can be found below:

1. Cover Sheet: A standard portfolio cover sheet is provided in Appendix D-F for each grade level. It serves as both a brief introduction for outside readers, and as a table of contents for your entire portfolio. Titles of individual documents in your portfolio *must* match the titles displayed on the cover sheet.

2. Introductory Document: The introductory document for each grade level is a carefully composed set of essay responses to a select menu of Personal Insight Questions; no one response should exceed 350 words. The essay will provide you with an opportunity to reflect on key personal and academic issues, and it will provide your readers with insight into who you are personally and academically. For seniors the responses satisfy a portion of the University of California application for admissions process.

8th grade - Response to 1 of the 4 NWP Personal Insight Questions (add Qs to Appendix G)

10th grade - Response to 2 of the 8 [UC Personal Insight Questions](#)

12th grade - Response to 4 of the 8 [UC Personal Insight Questions](#)

3. Record of Career Exploration: This element differs significantly per grade level, reflecting the development and increasing clarity of one's career interests as she moves toward graduation.

8th grade - List of Interests and Strengths

This is a list you will develop and refine during your 7th and 8th grade year of Crossroads. Until it is ready for submission at the end of 8th grade, consider it a living document. As a living document, it is subject to regular change as you explore and discover more about yourself as a learner, and as an individual. The final list should show evidence of the engaged self-exploration that characterizes the 7th and 8th grade

Crossroads class. It should also serve as a starting point for the job shadows and career exploration that you will take on in Crossroads as a high school student.

10th grade - Job Shadow “Resume” with Reflections

This succinct but polished document should provide the basic details of the four job shadows you will have completed by the end of 10th grade. Like a resume, it should be structured in chronological order, and should deliver information in as efficient a manner as possible (follow example in Appendix H). Unlike a resume, it will include a short personal reflection (about 150 words) for each job shadow experience. The reflection should focus on key takeaways: what you learned and discovered about your desired career path, and how that informs the internships you will seek as an 11th and 12th grade student.

12th grade - Resume with Internships

This is the real deal--a professional and comprehensive resume worthy of sending to a university admissions office or a select employer. It should be free of errors, well organized, and use language powerfully. It should convey to readers that you are a unique individual who knows how to play to his strengths in an authentic and professional manner. Be sure to include each internship and each relevant position you've held at school and elsewhere (example: Director of documentary for your Basecamp during the HDSAWI project).

4. Exemplars A, B, and C with Reflective Analysis:

Exemplar: Your exemplars can be any in a wide array of work samples. Potential exemplars will be collected and stored in a special folder throughout each school year. Each exemplar should:

- Demonstrate one or more “mode of doing”: Observe, Think, Act (8th grade excluded)
- Demonstrate 1-3 NWP Leadership Skills (depending on grade level)
- Be an example of your best work
- Demonstrate a balance of core academic abilities in action: research, inquiry, analysis, and creative expression

Your set of three selections must be approved by your Crossroads teacher by the end of third quarter. As a collection, the three exemplar should show a balance of different subject matter and modalities. Special arrangements may be possible for the selection of one exemplar that is still in progress, given that it is expected to meet criteria.

Reflective Analysis: A carefully drafted and polished Reflective Analysis, written as a formal essay, should accompany each exemplar. In Appendix I you will find detailed support for the writing of these essays. See important grade level details for the Reflective Analysis below:

8th grade - Each exemplar A, B, and C should effectively demonstrate one of the seven NWP Leadership Skills. Each reflective analysis essay should explain how your exemplar demonstrates the Leadership Skill, providing specific evidence as proof. This means you need good examples. Because the analysis is an essay, it should begin with an introduction and end with a conclusion.

10th grade - The analysis of each exemplar A, B, and C should explore and point to the three modes of doing: Observe, Think, and Act. Was this particular work focused by one mode of doing, or did the work move from one mode to another? One paragraph of your essay should focus on modes of doing. Next, your analysis should make the case that in the creation of this exemplar you demonstrated growth in 1-2 NWP Leadership Skills (across the three exemplars you must demonstrate growth in 5 of the 7 skills). Be sure to provide clear, compelling evidence of this growth with specific examples. Each analysis should stand alone as its own essay.

12th grade - The twelfth grade reflective analysis essays are much the same as the ones you created in tenth grade, but the expectations are higher. As tenth graders you were just beginning to wrap your minds around the three modes of doing; now you're experts. As such, your essays should demonstrate a strong grasp of what it means to move from one mode of doing to another, and why this might be needed. Your examples here should be dead on. Similarly, you should demonstrate deep knowledge and understanding, and ultimately master of, the seven Leadership Skills. Yes, all seven. As seniors you have many years of experience with these skills, and should have many possible examples to draw from. Remember, your goal here is to demonstrate your growth in these skills. Your written defense should convince your readers that you have attained a level of mastery over these skills which enables you to apply them to whatever obstacles and opportunities await. Convince readers that you are prepared to move on as an independent young adult.

5. Closing Document: This piece serves to conclude your entire portfolio. It is as if you were saying: "Given all that I've explored and determined in this collection of my work and my thoughts, I conclude that _____." Fill in the blank. What is your big takeaway? What does it all add up to? Because this takeaway is a result of all the exploring and reflecting you have done *while compiling* this portfolio, your conclusion should not be drafted--or even seriously considered--until you are finished with that compiling. Again, the closing document differs significantly per grade level:

8th grade - Goal for 9th Grade Year

This should be carefully and efficiently worded, be spot on, be academic *and* personal in nature, and be fewer than 35 words. The goal should also be measurable and realistic. It must be signed off by your Crossroads teacher.

10th grade - Statement of Academic Focus for Grades 11 and 12

This statement does not need to be written with style or flair. The focus here is on keenly assessing your own needs for growth (per the exploration and reflection of yourself as a learner that you have just completed). Your Crossroads teacher should be able to read the complete portfolio and practically write the Statement of Focus him or herself, based on the findings. It can be an overarching statement followed by a series a bulleted points, or it can be written in a succinct paragraph or two. The requirements are that it is accurate (per your portfolio's content), that it is not simply a regurgitation of four or five of the leadership skills (but instead is specific to you and your own needs), and that it lays

out a clear path for your intended growth in 11th and 12th grades. Your statement should also be measurable. Near the end of senior year you should be able to revisit this statement and clearly determine whether or not you achieved the growth you set out to achieve. If you are too general in your descriptions, such measurement will be impossible.

12th grade - Ten Years Statement

Imagine the self you intend to be in ten years. Describe what you see. Be specific. Use “show don’t tell” strategically but not exclusively. Summary is also a powerful tool that has a place in this writing. Craft your statement with an artful eye, with expert use of language, and with realism. It should not exceed 400 words, and should fit on one page.

The How: A Roadmap

The following outlines a ten-point plan for successfully constructing and passing your Portfolio Defense. It is strongly suggested that you either use this plan as a guide, or use it as a starting place to adapt your own plan. The Portfolio Defense is a significant undertaking, one that can become overwhelming and scary. A good way to defeat those emotions is to devise a realistic plan of action, one with clear and logical actions. See below for one version of such a plan.

1. Attend Crossroads Classes: Many of the documents required in your portfolio will be worked on and completed in Crossroads. Additionally, much of the personal exploration and inquiry that occurs in Crossroads is designed to lay the foundation for your portfolio documents. In other words, this is *not* a good class to miss. Attend Crossroads regularly, and keep up with daily activities. This class provides a crucial support network for succeeding in your Portfolio Defense.

2. Keep a “Portfolio Selection Folder”: Throughout the year Spotblock teachers will ask you to set aside finished work as a potential exemplar for your portfolio. Make sure to keep up with these requests. Keep all potential exemplars (or copies of them) in a specific folder titled “Portfolio Selection Folder - Your Name.” You may want to create sub-folders in this folder, one for each school year. This way, as you accumulate more and more documents, it will be easy to make sense of them, or to find a specific one when you need it. As you get closer to your defense, your “Portfolio Selection Folder” will provide you easy access to a body of your best work, facilitating the reflection that is needed for you to recognize and articulate your distinct path of growth from year to year to year.

3. Complete Reflections of Potential Exemplars: Spotblock teachers will also ask you to construct reflections of potential exemplars. Each reflection (or a copy of it) should be kept in your “Portfolio Selection Folder.” Remember to devise a system of organizing all your “Possible Selection” documents so you can easily tell which reflection goes with which possible exemplar, and so forth. These reflections, written shortly after the work was

completed, will provide you a head start when it comes time to write the reflective analysis essays for exemplars A, B, and C. Because the reflections focus on growth as well as on leadership skills, they should also help you decide which possible exemplar to include in your portfolio

4. Review the Upcoming Writing Task: Before selecting your exemplars review the writing task that comes next: the Reflective Analysis Essay. Knowing the specific grade level expectations of this task will help you make effective choices. Are you looking for an exemplar that demonstrates one leadership skill, or three? Do you also need to incorporate the three modes of doing? Get clarity on what's ahead. Make note of the key parts of your task.

5. Select Exemplars A, B, and C:

This step can make or break your Portfolio Defense. If you choose exemplars that do not show your full capacity, or that inadvertently fail to effectively demonstrate a leadership skill, you will pay the price later on. Choose wisely, and with keen forethought. Use the following criteria to aid your selection:

Each exemplar should:

- Demonstrate one or more “mode of doing”: Observe, Think, Act
- Demonstrate 1-3 NWP Leadership Skills (depending on your grade level)
- Be an example of your best work
- Demonstrate a balance of core academic abilities in action: research, inquiry, analysis, and creative expression

Selection of your set of three exemplars must be signed off by a Crossroads teacher by the end of third quarter.

6. Write Your Reflective Analyses: Each of your three exemplars A, B, and C is accompanied by a separate reflective analysis essay. Each essay should: introduce the piece of work, contextualize the work, analyze the work and reflect of the ways it demonstrates your growth as a learner, answer “so what?”, and close. More in depth support for this writing process is available in Appendix I. The completed essay should explain how the exemplar demonstrates your personal and academic growth as a learner, with emphasis placed on 1-3 leadership skills (depending on grade level), and on the 3 modes of doing: Observe, Think, and Act (8th graders are not required to include an emphasis on the three modes of doing; they can do so if they wish).

7. Seek Feedback: Periodically in Crossroads class teachers will hold group and/or individual sessions. Initially these sessions will be open conversations in which students discuss anxieties, questions, and progress surrounding their Portfolio Defense. Later the sessions will

take on the form of critique sessions, allowing for students to solicit feedback on their exemplar selections, on their analysis writing, and so forth. Feedback of this sort is valuable, but only if you make good use of it.

8. Submit your Portfolio Documents: Once each document is complete and polished you may submit it for approval. When the entire content of your portfolio is certified by your Crossroads teacher you are free to schedule your defense. See “The When and the Where” section below to determine your options for scheduling.

9. Practice your Defense: Your defense will be delivered live, and in the extemporaneous style. Accompanying slides should adhere to the Slideshow Guidelines in Appendix C. Eighth graders may read from prepared opening and closing statements (but must be *well practiced* and able to deliver with excellent speaking composure). All students may use bulleted notecards for the full duration of their presentations. The notecards should contain *no* complete thoughts, but only the fragments necessary to remind presenters of their talking points. Before delivery, presenters should become *well versed* in their content. There will be a live Q&A session with the panel after each exemplar defense; your ability to field the panel’s questions is key in the eyes of the judges. Any presenter that demonstrates a lack of familiarity with the content she is attempting to deliver will be asked to reschedule. Because one defense can take up to an hour, you should take your preparations quite seriously. No one wants an entire hour of their day wasted.

10. Defend!

Structure of Presentation:

- *Opening remarks* - Synthesized from select key content in your Personal Insight Questions, your opening remarks should let the panel know who you are personally and academically. This is a section of the defense in which you are encouraged to use style!
- *Exemplars A, B, and C, with analysis* - For each exemplar you should provide a persuasive yet scaled back version of your written reflective analysis. The goal is to prove your personal and academic growth by way of example. The suggested trajectory for this endeavor is as follows: Introduce → contextualize → discuss from Obs-Thk-Act perspective → focus on Leadership Skill applications → Q&A with panel → segue/wrap-up (note the Q&A with panel; this requires special preparation).
- *Closing remarks* - 8th graders will contextualize and then read their “Goal for 9th Grade Year”; high schoolers will extemporaneously present key content from their closing documents.

- *Panel deliberations* - For 8th graders deliberations will be combined with the feedback and decision session, and will take the form of a group conversation. For high schoolers it will be done behind closed doors.
- *Feedback and decision* - Presenter should be prepared to take detailed notes on his feedback, as the decision (not delivered until the end) may be to resubmit. One alternative to notetaking is to make an audio recording of the session.

The Who, When and Where: Your Panel and Venue

Background Information:

While the makeup of your panel and the venue for your defense will differ depending on your grade level, some aspects will be common for all presenters. In all cases, the panel is there to evaluate you; it is the panel's job to decide whether or not your defense reaches a level of proficiency. Panel members will use specially prepared notetaking sheets to record their evaluations of your performance each step of the way. When your presentation is over it is the panel's job to collectively decide whether or not you have passed. Before the decision is delivered, however, there will be a period in which the panel provides you with constructive feedback. Take notes or record this feedback session so you can access it later. If you do not pass, the information you are being provided with will become crucial as you prepare for your second defense.

Grade level details:

Who is on your panel? When and where will your defense occur? Read on to find out.

8th graders: All 8th grade defense presentations will occur during Crossroads class (yes, before an audience of your peers). A selection of 5-8 seventh grade students will be invited to sit in the audience as observers. Your panel will include two NWP teachers, and two NWP high school students. Deliberation will take place in the presentation room while you are present. It will be run as an open discussion between audience members and the panel, and will be facilitated by your Crossroads teacher. Decisions will be negotiated and delivered at the close of the discussion. Scheduling of defense presentations will begin during the fourth quarter; a student's portfolio must be fully certified before scheduling.

10th graders: Defense presentations will be delivered in Crossroads class before an audience of your peers. A selection of 5-8 ninth grade students will be invited to sit in the audience as observers. Your panel will include two NWP teachers and two NWP 11th or 12th grade students. Deliberation for all presenters will occur in private after all presentations for that day conclude; feedback and decisions will be disclosed when the Crossroads class next meets. Scheduling of defense presentations will begin during the fourth quarter; a student's portfolio must be fully certified before scheduling.

12th graders: Senior Defenses will be held after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and must be scheduled well in advance (it is *your* job to initiate this). Your panel will

include two NWP teachers, your parents/guardians, 1-2 POUSD board members and/or administrators, 1-2 former NWP graduates, and/or other relevant community members. Deliberations will occur in private directly after each presentation (allow for 30 minutes). Feedback and decisions will be provided to students immediately following deliberation.

Part 4 - What's the Point? A Rationale

The Why:

A portfolio defense is not a typical component of a 7-12th grade education. We believe it should be. Why do we feel this way?

In the big picture your 12th grade portfolio defense will serve as a critical milestone in your journey into adulthood. It is the culmination of several years of academic, cognitive, and emotional effort on your part. But your portfolio is not simply the sum of those various pieces of effort; it is instead an opportunity to reflect on what that sum is, how it was arrived at, and what you can make of it now. It is a synthesis of your education to date. The senior portfolio defense is both an invitation to discover the accumulative worth of your years at Northwest Prep, and a call to justify them. Why do we think this is a valuable use of your time?

The process of defending six years of work cultivates in you and your fellow students an array of powerful aptitudes and skills. Research consistently suggests that these aptitudes and skills are indicators of future success in individuals. We believe a 7-12th grade education is more than the acquisition of academic abilities. Rather, it is the process of becoming an autonomous adult who is able to interact with the world in an engaged and productive manner. The portfolio defense process, beginning with your 8th grade defense, helps you develop the needed aptitudes and skills for that interaction.

As a result of the portfolio defense process at NWP you will develop a growth mindset, reframing the concept of failure as one that is critical for the process of learning and growing. You will develop and hone your skills of self-reflection and analysis. You will become confident in your ability to engage professionally with colleagues and superiors alike, communicating ideas clearly and powerfully. And you will have the opportunity to engage in an authentic process of summative performance evaluation, a process that demands the curation, interpretation, and citations of concrete evidence in the form of your own work samples.

While we recognize our expectations are rigorous in nature, we know they will result in graduates that are competitive in both the workforce and whatever field of post-secondary education they may choose.

Appendix (or, Resources You May Need)

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Appendix A. Simplified NWP Leadership Skills Descriptors

Northwest Prep Leadership Skills, simplified

Personal Integrity

- you act with honesty
- you own up to what you do
- you stand up for what you believe
- you listen to feedback

Productive Collaboration

- you create and meet goals in your group
- you work through problems with group members
- you communicate your needs to group members
- you can change plans when needed

Critical and Creative Thinking

- you can see things through others' eyes
- you use your knowledge in new and original ways
- you think independently

Effective Communication

- you explain things clearly
- you talk to people in ways that are appropriate for the situation
- you notice how your body language affects other people
- you use different media to get ideas across

Reflective Learning

- you can see yourself from "outside eyes"
- you think about how you do things and make changes if needed
- you learn from your mistakes
- you learn from your successes

Citizenship and Global Responsibility

- you care about and know things about your community
- you think about the way your actions affect others
- you are compassionate
- you sometimes put your needs aside in order to help others

Resiliency and Drive

- you often see the upside of your mistakes
- you can push through tasks that seem hard
- you try hard
- you make sure to keep up your pace

Appendix B. NWP Six Year Plan

The [NWP Six Year Plan](#) (linked here) is a matrix of the content based skills and aptitude that teachers intend all students to both encounter and master by the time they leave Northwest Prep as graduates. The matrix is divided up by discipline (see labeled tabs to guide you to discipline specific pages). At the top of the matrix you will see descriptions of the specific skills and aptitudes, broken into categories. Down the left-most column you will see names of past and current projects at NWP, along with specific milestone assignments and activities that students engaged in during that project. For each assignment or activity the teacher of that discipline has marked with an “X” any skill or aptitude covered therein.

The matrix serves both as an indicator to teachers and students, helping to reveal patterns of practice as well as potential voids in learning. When embarking on a new project that offers a degree of choice around topic of study, for example, students will be asked to review their voids as a means to determine potential courses of study.

For parents the matrix is a way to track your child’s educational progress. It can also serve as a pivot point for considering whether your child has the needed background knowledge and skill for certain courses at Santa Rosa Junior College.

	Broad Category of Study	
	Description of specific skills or aptitude	Description of specific skills or aptitude
20XX-20XX school year		
Project Title (in form of acronym)		
Assignment/Activity Title	X*	
Assignment/Activity Title		X
Assignment/Activity Title		

*The “X” indicates that this skill/aptitude was taught and assessed in the assignment named at the left.

Appendix C. Slideshow Guidelines

Slideshow Guidelines

Text:

- Make every word count; avoid unnecessary verbiage
- Avoid large chunks of text (no paragraphs!)
- Generally use no more than 6 words per line
- Generally use no more than 6 lines per slide
- Larger fonts should indicate more important information
- Font size generally ranges from 24 to 48 point

Layout, Color, and Style:

- Left align bullets, don't center them
- Visually balance slides
- Standardize positions, colors and styles
- Be consistent with effects, transitions and animation
- Images or graphics should add to the text, not distract from it
- Use text colors that contrast with background
- Avoid distorting images when changing their size

Delivery:

- Dress professionally
- Mind your body language
- Introduce yourself with a cover slide, but connect with your audience
- Don't read your slides to the audience, expand on them
- Look at the audience while you speak, not your slides
- Pace yourself, don't rush through your content
- Be yourself
- But fake it ('til you make it) if you need to

Grade 8 Portfolio

Northwest Prep Charter School

Name: _____

School Year: _____

Grade 10 Portfolio

Northwest Prep Charter School

Name: _____

School Year: _____

Senior Portfolio

Northwest Prep Charter School

Name: _____

School Year: _____

Appendix G. NWP Personal Insight Questions

NWP Personal Insight Questions

For the 8th grade Introductory Document

Choose one of the following questions and respond in essay format (350 words or less). Your response should demonstrate introspection (an ability to see and make sense of your own emotional processes), and should provide outside readers some insight into who you are and how you operate in the world. Because this is an essay it should include a brief introduction and a brief conclusion. The main body of the essay should fully answer the Personal Insight Question that you have chosen. As the introductory document to your portfolio, this essay should be an example of your best work.

- 1) Describe an incident from 1-2 years ago that challenged your sense of right and wrong. What happened? What thoughts went through your mind? How did you decide what to do? Would you do the same thing today? Why or why not?
- 2) In your opinion what are the three most important traits in a friend? Why? Think about your current relationships. How would you assess yourself, given this criteria, from the perspective of your friends? Be brutally honest.
- 3) What is your most prominent and/or problematic character flaw? How does it play out in your daily life? Give concrete examples. What are some ways might you begin to work on this flaw? What would it take for you to do that?
- 4) Imagine you were given the chance to change *one thing* about how the world works. What would you change? Why would you choose that one thing? What effect do you think it might have in your own world? In the world of others?

Appendix H. Example: Job Shadow “Resume” with Reflections

Jane Doe
Northwest Prep Charter School
Grade 10

Chelsea McKenna Design
725 Farmers Lane
Santa Rosa, CA
(707) 200 3945

Date of shadow: April 9th, 2016
Position shadowed: graphic artist/designer
Contact: Chelsea McKenna, owner

Reflection:

I was not sure what a graphic designer did, but people had told me it may be a good job for me. I learned that I really might like this job, but that it also entails certain things I didn't think about before like dealing with indecisive and/or unhappy customers. I'm not sure how I would handle that. The artist I shadowed did have a lot of autonomy in how she spent her day though, and she was pretty much in charge of her professional life. I think I might want to own my own small business like her someday too.

Marmot Mountain, LLC
5789 State Farm Drive
Rohnert Park, CA
www.marmot.com
(707) 544 4590

Date of Shadow: October 12, 2015
Position shadowed: Director of Brand
Contact person: Jill Sallenger

Reflection:

This was much more a "business" type job than I thought. It was more about marketing and selling a brand (and working with the other marketing people at Marmot, almost as that of a manager) than I'd anticipated. Still, it was a pretty interesting look into the world of an

Appendix I. Support for Writing Reflective Analysis Essays (under construction)

Appendix J. Additional Resources (under construction)

- **Rubrics**
- **NWP's Six Year Plan (description and link)**
- **Videos ?**
- **Teacher supports**
 - Example of ways to use Crossroads class to support students:
 - <https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/benefits-of-advisory-eed>
 - <https://vimeo.com/33246151>