

[Your Pathway Name]

Portfolio-Defense

Student Handbook

At the end of 12th grade, you will present a portfolio of work that demonstrates you have developed the skills and knowledge, accomplishing what is expected of an LAUSD graduate. You will also deliver a public defense of your portfolio before a panel, making the case that you are ready for the next stage of your education. This handbook serves as a guide for creating and defending your portfolio.

Part 1 – Overview

- [What's Expected of a Graduate](#) of [Your Pathway]
- [The Basic Structure of the Portfolio-Defense](#)

Part 2 – [How to create and defend your portfolio](#)

1. [Select your artifacts](#)
2. [Reflect on your skills and learning](#)
3. [Prepare your defense](#)
4. [Make your case](#)

Part 3 – Supporting documents

- The Defense Rubric
- Some Background on the Portfolio-Defense System

What's Expected of You

[The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of your district's graduate profile and your pathway's student learning outcomes and to explain how this portfolio-defense serves as an assessment of those expectations. Lots of different ways this section could be structured.]

[Explain your pathway outcomes and how they are being elicited and measured through this portfolio defense.]

[Include the LAUSD Graduate profile]

The LAUSD Graduate Profile defines the knowledge, skills, and attributes you should have and be able to demonstrate to show your readiness for college, career, and life.

Efficacious

As an efficacious graduate, you can . . .

- Develop and revise personal/professional growth plan to capitalize on strengths and address areas of growth.
- Set, review, revise and meet short- and long term goals and deadlines, making appropriate use of family, community and professional resources.
- Demonstrate grit and perseverance.
- Collaborate productively in diverse groups to make decisions and achieve common goals.

Adaptable

As an adaptable graduate, you can . . .

- Think critically and creatively using knowledge and skills from a variety of disciplines.
- Demonstrate a reflective, flexible and dynamic mind-set.
- Identify and solve challenges using a cohesive, efficient, and revisable plan of action.

Worldly-Wise

As a worldly-wise graduate, you can . . .

- Participate in civics and engage in local community service.
- Display awareness of and respect for diverse cultures.
- Understand the finite nature of our universal resources and utilize sustainable practices.

- Demonstrate awareness of global economic needs and the respective careers and skills to serve them.

Influential

As an influential graduate, you can . . .

- Communicate persuasively using multiple mediums and 21st century tools.
- Develop and sustain positive relationships.
- Interpret social and emotional cues as needed for active listening and effective dialogue.
- Design innovative technical and artistic creations appropriate for specific audiences and purposes.

The Basic Structure

The portfolio-defense system is divided into two main parts: 1) the portfolio and 2) the defense.

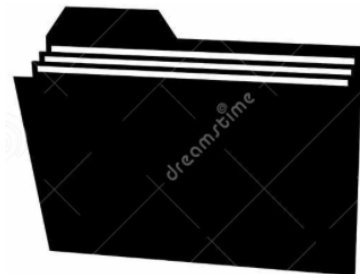
The relationship between the portfolio and the defense is similar to the relationship between a resume and a job interview. The resume describes what you can do on paper, and it can be reviewed independently, ahead of time and without you in the room. The job interview, in contrast, is a live event, providing the opportunity for you to expand upon what's in the resume, and for the interviewer to learn things about you that cannot be communicated on paper.

Similarly, your portfolio and your defense are related but distinct. Once your portfolio is assembled, it can be viewed by an assessor anywhere, anytime. Your defense is a live event before a panel of evaluators.

Let's discuss the two parts in more detail:

The Portfolio

In your portfolio, you present and reflect on work you have done that offers observable evidence of your ability to apply [Your Pathway] outcomes. Your portfolio will contain eight artifacts of your work, each one *chosen by you* to represent your readiness to graduate from high school.



The eight required elements of your portfolio are divided into three categories, as follows:

College & Career Readiness

1. **Analysis** – a piece of your work that demonstrates your ability to break down complex concepts or phenomena into their named parts and explain the relationships between those parts
2. **Argument** – a piece of your work that demonstrates your ability to advance and support a position among competing positions
3. **Problem Solving** – a piece of your work that demonstrates your ability to propose and support a solution to a problem
4. **Student-Directed Inquiry** – a piece of your work that demonstrates your ability to pose a sophisticated question and organize a sustained search for the answer

Exploring College Access, Career Development, and Community Engagement (ECCCO)

5. **Your Personal Statement Essay** – evidence of your working toward college access
6. **Your Resume** – evidence of your working toward a meaningful career
7. **Community Engagement Artifact** – evidence demonstrating that you have engaged in meaningful community service

Student Accomplishment [can be pathway specific]

8. **Student-selected artifact** representing present accomplishment and future promise

[The pathway can decide if you want this to be a defined, pathway-specific artifact or leave it open for a student to submit an "independent" artifact-- something he/she has had a passion for and has worked towards creating/developing over an extended period of time.]

For all artifacts except #5 and #6, you will write a reflection that analyzes the work and explains in detail how and why it demonstrates what it has been selected to represent.

Details on how to choose artifacts and how to write reflections come later in this guidebook.

The Defense

The defense is a live event before a panel of evaluators. You make the case that you are ready to move on to the next level — in this case, graduating from high school. As with any argument, you must cite evidence to support your claims. In this case, you cite evidence from your portfolio.

Based on the strength of your presentation, the panel— [which will include teachers and at least one fellow student]—makes a decision that you have passed or that you have room for improvement and need to make another attempt.

What it takes to pass will not be a mystery. A rubric that details what is expected of you is included in this handbook.

Your teachers will work with you and help you to practice your defense. If you have properly prepared, then your defense is not a challenge to fear but a celebration of all your hard work and something to look forward to.

More detail on what to defend and how to defend it comes later in this guidebook.



How to create and defend your portfolio

At first glance, the [Your Pathway] portfolio-defense may seem like a big, daunting project. It shouldn't. Yes, you do need to put effort into getting ready for it, but for the most the part, that effort is spent not in creating new work but in *organizing work that you have already done and reflected on*, in your day-to-day life as a high school student.

There are four steps to creating and defending your portfolio:

1. Select your artifacts
2. Reflect on your skills and learning
3. Prepare your defense
4. Make your case

The next section of this handbook walks you through each of these steps in detail. As you consider the steps, keep in mind that your [Your Pathway] education is designed to get you ready for this. As long as you stay on top of your work, you have many reasons not to worry:

- In your classes, your teachers will give you an opportunity to document and reflect on your work. So you will be maintaining your portfolio constantly.
- You will be practicing your presentation skills constantly as a student at [Your Pathway], in your classes and through your projects, so you don't need to be nervous about the public speaking part.
- Your teachers will offer support all along the way.

1 Select your artifacts

As a high school student, you are preparing for your portfolio-defense every day, in your coursework and in your projects, so you have opportunities all year and throughout your years at [\[Your Pathway\]](#) to collect evidence of your growth and your readiness to move on.

Your first step is to choose your artifacts, examples of your work that demonstrate your skills and your college and career readiness.

[\[More detail here about how collection and selection works at your pathway. How students know what is “portfolio-eligible,” how to use systems \(for example, ConnectEd\) for collecting work and getting it “certified,” etc.\]](#)

Here are some examples of the kinds of work you might put into your portfolio, organized by required categories:



#1 – Analysis

Breaking down concepts or phenomena into their parts and explaining the relationships between those parts

Examples of analysis:

- literary analysis essay
- historical research paper
- presentation on a math theorem
- science lab
- analysis of a work of art
- environmental study
- market analysis
- community health issue analysis



#2 – Argument

Advancing and supporting a position among competing positions

Examples of argument:

- position paper on a controversial historical issue
- economics argument paper
- book or art review
- science-based editorial
- performance in a government debate
- video documentary on a current events topic



#3 – Problem Solving

Proposing and supporting a solution to a problem

Examples of problem solving:

- long-form math problem
- computer program
- science application
- proposal to a town council
- engineering design brief
- business plan
 - theater set design proposal



#4 – Student-Directed Inquiry

Posing a sophisticated question and organizing a sustained search for the answer

Examples of student-directed inquiry:

- student-designed scientific experiment
- student-designed historical research paper
- longform thesis paper on an author or literary period
- art portfolio
- field research for community issue



#5 – Personal Statement

Gaining college access

Your personal statement is more than just an essay you can submit to colleges. It's a reflection on who you are as a learner, what your journey has been, and what all this means for your future.

[Insert more sentences here about how students will generate and iterate on their personal statement at your pathway.]



#6 – Your resume

Finding your career path

Including your resume in your portfolio is a sign that . . .

[Insert more sentences here about how students will generate and iterate on their resume at your pathway.]



#7 – Community Engagement

Understanding and contributing toward your community

[wide room for pathway definition here]

#8 – Student Accomplishment

Revealing your accomplishment and future promise

[The pathway can decide if you want this to be a defined, pathway-specific artifact or leave it open for a student to submit an "independent" artifact-- something he/she has had a passion for and has worked towards creating/developing over an extended period of time.]

2 Reflect on your skills and learning

For all artifacts except #5 and #6, you will write a reflection that analyzes the work and explains in detail how and why it demonstrates what it has been selected to represent. In your reflection, you should:

- Introduce and contextualize the artifact. Where is it coming from? How did you create it?
- Analyze the artifact, explaining in detail how it represents its competency, whether analysis, problem solving, community engagement, etc.
- Reflect on your understanding of that competency, how you have grown in it, and what progress you still need to make.

In many ways, this step is the most important. Your portfolio-defense is an argument for your readiness, and it is in your reflections that your argument is being made. Much of the thinking that goes into your reflections will help you in making your oral defense.

[Needs LOTS of pathway specific detail on where and how reflections are written, ideally a student example, etc.]

3

Prepare your defense

Once you have completed your portfolio, you can turn your attention to preparing for your defense, which is an oral presentation you will make to a panel. As discussed earlier in this handbook, your portfolio and your defense are related but distinct. While your portfolio offers a general overview of your skills and your college readiness, your defense answers a more specific question:

Am I college, career, and community ready?

In order to answer this question, your defense should draw from evidence in your portfolio, but *you should not cover everything that is in your portfolio*. For one, you won't have time within the xx minutes you have to speak. More importantly, repeating what is in your portfolio won't answer the question above.

Remember, the panelists to whom you make your defense will have seen your portfolio, reviewed your exemplars, and considered your reflections beforehand. At your defense, they are looking for you to say things that go beyond your portfolio, to tell the story of what you have learned, how you have grown, and how you have lived up to the responsibility of being part of your school.

Basic Requirements of the Defense

- ❑ Runs from **xx to xx minutes**
- ❑ [Student must show evidence of both growth and graduation-readiness by referencing at least 1-3 artifacts [TBD by the pathway] from the portfolio.]

Tips for a Successful Defense

- ❑ Be specific. Put your work, your skills, and your contributions to the your community under a magnifying glass. When you cite evidence, take time to really present and explain it.
- ❑ Talk about how you've grown as a contributor to your community. Stories of growth are compelling to audiences because their honesty invites trust. Cite evidence of your growth by comparing points in time.
- ❑ Learning experiences that changed your perspective or attitude always make for powerful stories. A great technique for defense is to explain how you arrived at a new and deeper understanding of community or a particular Sustainability Skill.

- ❑ Don't hesitate to include additional evidence from outside of your portfolio if it helps you to make your case.

4

Make your case

On [\[insert dates here\]](#), you will defend your portfolio before a panel of evaluators.

This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your ability to design a coherent and engaging presentation, to confidently engage an audience for a sustained length of time, to speak extemporaneously, to listen and respond to questions. You should inject some creativity into your presentation.

It is also an opportunity for the panel to ask you to elaborate on what is in the portfolio. You will need to answer questions that *won't* be provided to you ahead of time. This is why it's important to select work that you care about and know deeply.



How it works

Your defense will be scheduled for a x-minute time slot, during which you will stand at the front of a room and make your presentation with your supporting visual imagery. The x minutes will break down as follow:

Your presentation	x minutes
Q&A with the panel	x minutes
Panel deliberates	x minutes
Feedback & wrap-up	x minutes

Who is on your panel

You will make your presentation to a panel of evaluators. Their job is to review your portfolio beforehand, listen carefully to your defense, ask you questions during the

question-and-answer session, assess your performance with the rubric, and provide you with feedback on your strengths and weaknesses.

Your panel will be comprised of

❑ xxxxxxx

How you are evaluated

The panel will also use a rubric to measure the quality of your defense. This rubric will measure your preparation and the quality of your presentation skills.

After your Q&A session, you will leave the room, and for five minutes the panelists will discuss your performance and reach consensus on how to score you on the defense rubric.

At the end of their deliberations, the panelists will invite you back into the room. After giving you detailed feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of your performance, the panelists will let you know whether or not you passed your defense.

What happens if you don't pass your defense

If you do not pass your defense, you are asked to “resubmit.” You will be given a chance to make improvements to your presentation, based on the feedback you have received, and you will try again on [xxxxxxx].

If you do not pass your second attempt, you will have the opportunity for a third try, at a time to be determined with your teachers.

Not passing is of course disappointing but is by no means the end of the world. Many accomplished students have been asked to resubmit their defense. Those who attend to the feedback and suggestions for improvement almost always pass on their second attempt. Most students who resubmit feel proud of the improvements they've made and ultimately view the whole thing as a valuable learning experience.

Supporting Documents

[a place to put scaffolding tools, such as . . .]

- Reflection template
- Digital Portfolio instructions
- Senior Defense Rubric
- PPT template for Senior Defense visual presentation