



RethinkEd

REAL WORLD READINESS SCORECARD

Real World Readiness Scorecard: Is Your District Preparing Students for Life Beyond Graduation?



Helping students grow into prepared, responsible, future ready citizens is the goal of every district. You'll see it reflected in your strategic plans, school goals, Portrait of a Graduate initiatives, and educator vision boards.

But academic success alone isn't enough, especially in today's ever-changing world. To thrive in college, career, and life, students

also need essential real-world skills like critical thinking, innovation, collaboration, responsibility, and digital literacy.

While some of these skills are naturally embedded into academics, there may be an opportunity to teach them more intentionally and consistently to further prepare students for life beyond the classroom.

This self-assessment will help you:

- Evaluate where and how life readiness skills are being taught today
- Identify skill areas with room to grow
- Take action with next steps to strengthen future-ready instruction

Score each of the five skill areas then total your score to see tips and best practices for building a strong life readiness plan in your district.

Skill Area 1: Critical Thinking and Innovation

Know how to think, not just what to think



In a world where change is constant and answers aren't always clear; students need more than memorization to get by. They need to think critically by evaluating information, questioning assumptions, and solving problems outside of the box. But they also need to think *creatively*. Innovating new ideas and approaching challenges with fresh perspectives is critical to success. These skills empower students to make confident, informed decisions without relying on a teacher or adult to steer them in the right direction.

Stage	Where We Are Today
Advanced (4 points)	Students regularly engage in structured, multi-step activities that teach them how to analyze root causes, evaluate sources, test solutions, and revise thinking. Skills progress from basic questioning to advanced reasoning across grade levels.
Developing (3 points)	Some lessons include critical thinking or creative problem-solving, but there is limited progression or connection across subjects and grade levels. Activities often emphasize finding the “right” answer rather than exploring multiple solutions.
Emerging (2 points)	Students occasionally do project-based work that encourages deeper thinking, but these are isolated or teacher-initiated, without scaffolding or reflection on the thinking process.
Not Started (1 point)	Critical thinking is not intentionally taught or practiced. Assignments focus mostly on recall and routine procedures.

Points

Skill Area 2: Effective Communication and Collaboration

Be heard and actively listen to others



Communication is essential for success in every part of life, not just during job interviews or when emailing a professor. Students need to know how to clearly express their ideas, listen actively, and meaningfully collaborate with others. Strong communication skills help them build collaborative relationships, solve problems together, and contribute thoughtfully to real-world situations.

Stage	Where We Are Today
Advanced (4 points)	Students engage in frequent, scaffolded opportunities to present ideas, participate in structured dialogue, and collaborate on shared tasks. Instruction includes feedback loops, peer review, and real-world communication tasks.
Developing (3 points)	Some communication and group work activities are used, but they are mostly unstructured or assignment-based, with limited feedback or reflection.
Emerging (2 points)	Students sometimes work in groups or present ideas, but skills like listening, clarifying, or responding to disagreement are not an area of focus.
Not Started (1 point)	There are few or no planned opportunities for communication practice beyond standard class participation.

Points

Skill Area 3: Adaptability and Lifelong Learning

Prepare for change in an everchanging world



Life demands flexibility, especially as tools, expectations, and circumstances evolve. Students who can adapt and stay curious will be more likely to rise above and meet challenges that come their way. These skills help them grow with confidence, be resilient, and turn obstacles into opportunities.

Stage	Where We Are Today
Advanced (4 points)	Students are consistently supported in setting learning goals, reflecting on progress, and adapting their strategies based on feedback. Instruction encourages flexible thinking and transfer of knowledge across subject areas and real-world scenarios.
Developing (3 points)	Students engage in reflection or goal setting in some programs or classes, but the skills of self-direction and adaptability are not consistently reinforced across grades or contexts.
Emerging (2 points)	Occasional lessons or projects highlight flexibility and learning from mistakes, but these practices are isolated and not tied to long-term growth.
Not Started (1 point)	Students rarely reflect on their learning process, set goals, or adjust strategies. Learning is primarily teacher-directed and outcome-focused.

Points

Skill Area 4: Digital Literacy

Use technology with purpose, balance, and clarity



Being digitally connected doesn't guarantee digital readiness. Students must be able to navigate the digital world with a critical eye, an ethical mindset, and the ability to use technology intentionally. When students build digital literacy, they evaluate their habits, understand how algorithms shape what they see, create meaningful content across multiple platforms, and learn how to use AI effectively and responsibly.

Steps	Key Actions
Advanced (4 points)	Students have regular, structured opportunities to reflect on their digital habits, analyze media, and explore how platforms like social media and AI are designed to influence them. They consistently use digital tools to collaborate, create, and contribute in ways that are thoughtful, responsible, and relevant to the real world.
Developing (3 points)	Digital literacy skills are introduced in some lessons or courses, but instruction around digital wellness, content creation, or media influence is limited or inconsistent across grade levels.
Emerging (2 points)	Students receive basic instruction in digital citizenship (e.g., online safety), but skills related to evaluating online content, managing digital habits, or understanding social media impact are not well developed.
Not Started (1 point)	Digital tools are used regularly, but students receive little to no instruction on how to navigate digital spaces critically, safely, or intentionally.

Points

Skill Area 5: Personal and Social Responsibility

Make thoughtful choices and contribute to the world around you



Thriving in today's world requires more than good intentions—it requires action. Students must be equipped to investigate global and local issues, reflect on their own values, consider perspectives beyond their own, and follow through on goals that serve both self and community. These skills prepare students to act thoughtfully, stay accountable, and contribute meaningfully to the world around them.

Stage	Where We Are Today
Advanced (4 points)	Students regularly engage in structured experiences that build empathy, ethical reasoning, and initiative. They explore diverse perspectives, take informed action on real-world issues, and reflect on their personal and collective responsibilities. These practices are embedded across courses and grade levels.
Developing (3 points)	Students are introduced to important skills like goal setting, reflection, and understanding different perspectives, but those lessons aren't consistently reinforced across grades or subjects.
Emerging (2 points)	Occasional activities or lessons touch on responsibility, global citizenship, or reflection, but they are isolated and typically driven by individual teachers or one-time events.
Not Started (1 point)	There is little to no structured effort to help students understand the impact of their actions or develop responsible habits.

Points

Evaluate Your Score

Add all the point totals from each section and use the scoring guide below to help you identify your current state and next steps to implement or improve your life readiness plan.

Score 5-10: Room To Grow

Life readiness is likely happening in small, informal ways in your district. Your team recognizes the importance of these skills but needs a clear plan to ensure students are consistently learning them across all grade levels. **Your next steps:**

Start the conversation:

Gather your district leadership team to discuss where the skills are or aren't being taught today. Decide who should be responsible for real world instruction moving forward.

Pilot with purpose:

It's okay to start small. Identify one advisory period, homeroom, or teacher leader to pilot a life skill focus. Choose one or two key skills to teach weekly. Use this pilot to collect feedback and make improvements before incorporating more skills across additional settings.

Create space for growth:

Set a timeline for your pilot and define what progress looks like. Include goals, feedback cycles, and outcome measures. Be sure to include educator and student feedback in your review.

Score 11-19: Strong Foundation

You are introducing real-world readiness skills to your students, but you could benefit from content progression and consistency in instruction. Create a unified framework with goals for each grade to see a jump in your students' skill level. **Your next steps:**

Complete an audit:

Map out where and how life skills are being taught today. Are all students receiving instruction, or does it vary by school, course, or teacher?

Design progression:

Outline what progress looks like from grade 6 to grade 12. What should students be learning each year, so they are intentionally building upon lessons and skills?

Invest in training:

Not all educators are confident in teaching life skills. Allow educators and instructors to use professional developing time to collaborate with each other and learn best practices for teaching students about the real-world challenges they will face.

Score 20-25: Refine and Align

Your district is prioritizing life readiness, and your students are learning what it takes to be successful in their next adventure. Your students are likely engaging with life skills across multiple touchpoints and are participating in a Portfolio of a Graduate initiative. Sustaining and refining your efforts is your next focus. Remember, the stronger your implementation, the more confident and capable your students become in navigating life beyond graduation.

Collect student feedback:

Let your students get involved in your program refinement. Ask them to complete surveys or join planning sessions. Their ideas can help shape how and when you deliver your content so it has the most impact. Bonus points for engaging with recent graduates for their feedback too!

Meet students where they are:

Even the best content can fall flat if it doesn't feel relatable. Use materials that engage students like videos, social media-style interviews, and young adult voices to keep students engaged and motivated.

Use a consistent curriculum:

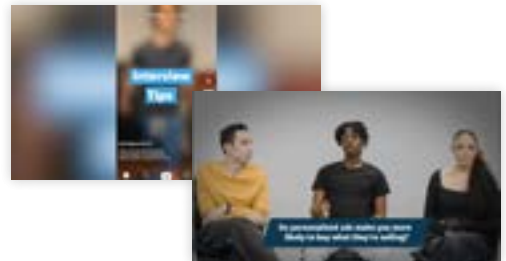
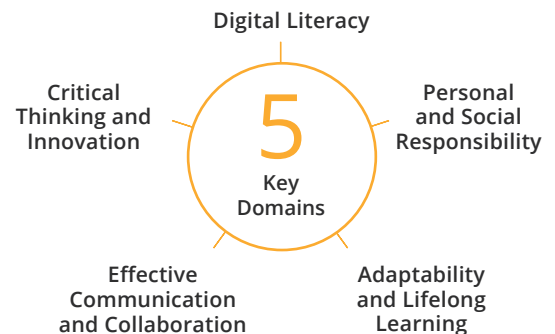
Adopt a dedicated curriculum to provide structure, reduce educator prep time, and increase consistency across schools and classrooms.

Discover LifeEd

LifeEd is a real-world readiness curriculum that helps districts foster future-ready students.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- **Instruction** for grades 6-12
- **Content covers all five key life skill areas**
- **Flexible lessons** fit into advisory, homeroom, and core instruction
- **Student-centered content** features videos and young adult voices
- **Built-in on-demand training** boosts educator confidence



Whether you're just getting started or looking to strengthen your program already in place, LifeEd helps you build confident, future-ready graduates.

Talk to a RethinkEd team member >

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