

Dear Administration, Faculty, and whoever else might be listening/reading this,

Welcome back to school! We know you're so excited to be back! (You can individually determine the level of sarcasm in that sentence). We've written a short explanation to give some context to our final design of Westwood Public Schools' new Portrait of a Graduate.

For those who need a refresher, the written portion of the POG was formed over this past school year during multiple collaborative meetings with faculty, students, and members of the community, with the help of Dore + Whittier. The final version contains four competencies: think critically and creatively, communicate and collaborate, act with integrity, and engage locally and globally. These competencies embody the vision the district has for future graduates/learners, and then our task was to turn these competencies into some sort of a visual.

The visual needed to be modern and visually appealing, yet informative—but not in a corporate way.

At the last full group meeting, many drew out variations of the current WPS logo, the wolverine paw, or a tree as design ideas. We went in another direction.

Wait, back up. Who is “we?” The final graphics were created by Gianna Grilli '26, Gabby Hennessey '26, Terris Jones '25, and Sarahluna Sassine '25. The four of us were recruited by Ms. Parker (shoutout Ms. Parker) either because she has worked alongside us to create digital layouts (shoutout the yearbook!) or has seen our graphic design abilities and thought we'd make a good team together.

The creative process consisted of multiple meetings over the summer (both in-person and on zoom) in collaboration with Jason, Michele, and Mike from Dore + Whittier. During the first meeting, Mike asked us a question along the lines of, “what symbols do you associate with your time at WPS?” Slides, backpacks, and school supplies were all shared, with each of us creating individual sketches. The one that stood out the most was writing utensils and how they evolve as a student progresses through the grades—crayons get swapped with markers as students become more responsible, and pencils can be traded in for pens as they gain confidence in their work.

We tried so many things with the utensils: different ways of integrating the W, a pencil case, a desk, a crayola box, a puzzle of sorts, but in the end settled for an organic, scattered situation on the lined paper, to bring it back to the classroom. The chosen utensils were heavily debated as well. A pen for “act with integrity.” Why? A pen’s permanent, creating marks that don’t budge. Integrity involves having beliefs that stick, which let you stand behind your actions and their consequences, both relatively permanent things. A crayon for “think critically and creatively” because you start with the crayons as a kid. They are a part of your continuous learning path, and you learn to be deliberate with its placement. They’re also fun and colorful, key parts of creativity, especially in younger grades. They’re the fun utensil of the batch. A highlighter is necessary as you age through WPS, especially as you are exposed to wider ranges of content. It works for “engaging locally and globally” because it connects ideas and communities, and allows for easy sharing of them as you draw attention to new and important information with each stroke of a highlighter. Last but not least, your classic No. 2 pencil. In the earlier drafts we were thinking about including an eraser for a competency, because it’s important to revise ideas and perspectives. However, it felt a little contradictory to connect a literal eraser to one of them (imagine an eraser for “think locally and globally” - BAD IDEA), so we thought it would be a better idea to flip the pencil to show the eraser on its end. Communication requires the tip of the pencil to share your ideas, but having the eraser as an option allows for collaboration and compromise, while being open to new ideas, which is an important skill for all.

The rest of the work came down to our individual strengths, and any tweaks that were advised from group meetings. The colors were chosen because they are bright (but not hurt your eyes bright), and welcoming, and could fit in anywhere from an elementary school classroom to a high school hallway. And no offense, but students are a bit tired of the wolverine green. Multiple versions of the graphic maximize the audience, making it easy for younger students, parents and community members, staff, and older students to engage with the content at their target reading level and desired depth.

And there you go, a visual to the new Westwood Public Schools’ Portrait of a Graduate. Our work here is done.

Thank you for this opportunity and we hope this design is useful for years to come!

Gianna, Gabby, Terris, and Sarahluna