A FIELD GUIDE

The Redesign Crosswalk

K–12 Edition

Reconstituting Traditional Writing Assignments

Turning what we assign into what students can actually do — and evidence that they can do it.

BUILT FOR

Elementary, middle, and high school educators, curriculum specialists, instructional coaches, and district leaders.

A NOTE ON USE

AI activities should be age-appropriate, use district-approved tools, and align with applicable grade-level standards.

We must stop assuming that the completion of an academic product automatically demonstrates the development of the intellectual capabilities that product was intended to cultivate.

The purpose of reconstituting learning is not to make assignments easier or more technologically sophisticated. It is to make the relationship between learning objectives, intellectual development, assessment, and real-world application more intentional, transparent, and measurable.

INSIDE

How to use this guide — Four ways in, depending on how much time you have
Index and skill finder — Every assignment, and every skill with its card numbers
At a glance — The full crosswalk on one landscape page
The cards — One assignment per card: measure, redesign, skills, why, evidence
Your turn — A blank card you can print and fill in by hand

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How to use this guide

Four ways in. Pick the one that matches the time you have.

Two minutes

Find your assignment on the index. Read one card. That is enough to start a conversation in a department meeting.

Twenty minutes

Open the at-a-glance poster and circle every card that describes something you already assign. Most people find four to six.

One planning period

Take one card, use the three questions below, and write your own version of the redesign column. Bring it to your PLC.

A full term

Work through the cards one department at a time. Each card is a design decision, not a rewrite of the course.

The three questions that make a card work

WHAT

What must the student be able to do? Name it as a verb a human performs, not a product a tool produces.

WHY

Why does it matter outside this course? Name where it shows up in the discipline, the job, or civic life.

WHERE

Where will we see the thinking? Name the moment it becomes visible and cannot be faked, borrowed, or generated.

Three distinctions worth keeping straight

1. **Hard skills are teachable, demonstrable technical or disciplinary competencies —** research methods, writing, data analysis, source verification, digital literacy.

2. **Soft skills are the durable, transferable capabilities —** communication, adaptability, collaboration, leadership, critical thinking. They can and should be assessed through observable behaviors, not inferred from a grade.

3. **Learning outcomes specify the performance students must demonstrate —** the skills on these cards are possible outcomes. Each district or institution must translate them into measurable statements aligned to its own curriculum.

The six capabilities this guide keeps pointing at

Communication

Can they explain it to someone who disagrees?

Critical thinking

Can they find the weakness in their own argument?

Collaboration

Does the group change its mind in the room?

Self-advocacy

Can they name what they do not understand and ask early?

Adaptability and grit

Did they come back for revision two?

Ethical judgment

What did they decide when nobody was checking?

A note on the titles: *the proposed terms describe intellectual activities. They are not replacements for every traditional assignment title. A research paper can remain a research paper — its design can deliberately emphasize evidence-based knowledge construction, and its assessment can capture whether students can evaluate sources, synthesize findings, and defend conclusions.*

Index of assignments

Click a title to jump to its card. Card numbers are printed on every card, so the index still works on paper.

#	WHAT WE ASSIGN	WHAT WE COULD BE BUILDING INSTEAD
01	Five-paragraph essay	Cognitive Composition
02	Research report	Evidence-Based Knowledge Construction
03	Persuasive essay	Intellectual Position Development
04	Book report	Interpretive Knowledge Construction
05	Reading response	Critical Meaning-Making
06	Discussion post	Critical Knowledge Exchange
07	Reflection journal	Metacognitive Learning Narrative
08	Science lab report	Evidence-to-Explanation Inquiry
09	History essay	Historical Evidence Reconstruction
10	Creative writing	Creative Knowledge Expression
11	Career exploration report	Future-Ready Career Inquiry
12	Capstone or senior project	Applied Competency Demonstration

Find it by skill

Every skill named on the cards, with the card numbers that name it. Start where the student is stuck, not where the syllabus starts.

Adaptability 07, 11
Collaboration 06, 12
Critical Thinking 01, 05
Empathy 03, 04
Judgment 03, 09
Perspective-taking 04, 09
Research 02, 12
Active Listening 06
Analytical Thinking 02
Argument Structure 01
Argumentation 03
Career Research 11
Chronology 09
Citation 02
Close Reading 05
Communication 01
Creativity 10
Curiosity 02
Data Analysis 08
Digital Communication 06
Digital Literacy 11
Evidence Use 06
Goal Tracking 07
Imagination 10
Information Literacy 02
Interpretation 05
Language 10
Leadership 12
Literary Analysis 04
Persuasion 03
Planning 11
Precision 08
Primary-source Analysis 09
Problem-solving 08
Project Management 12
Reflection 05
Reflective Writing 07
Rhetoric 03
Scientific Method 08
Self-regulation 07
Story Structure 10
Textual Evidence 04
Writing 01

How to read it: *the number is the card. If a skill appears on six cards, that is your argument that it is not a soft extra — it is the spine of the programme.*

AT A GLANCE

Every assignment, every reframing, one page

The full crosswalk. Find yourself here, then go to the card with that number for the redesign, the skills, and what it looks like at work.

#	WHAT WE ASSIGN	PROPOSED REFRAMING	WHAT WE'RE ACTUALLY MEASURING	HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY	HARD / SOFT SKILLS	REAL-WORLD APPLICATION
01	**Five-paragraph essay**	**Cognitive Composition**	Organization of thought, argumentation, communication	Students investigate an issue, build an argument map, critique suggested structures, and explain their reasoning.	H Writing, argument structure S Critical thinking, communication	Persuasive communication, proposals, advocacy
02	**Research report**	**Evidence-Based Knowledge Construction**	Research literacy, source evaluation, synthesis	Students investigate a real-world question, compare sources, verify AI-supported claims, and create a supported explanation.	H Research, citation, information literacy S Analytical thinking, curiosity	Investigating problems, evaluating online information
03	**Persuasive essay**	**Intellectual Position Development**	Evidence-based persuasion and reasoning	Students examine a community issue, consider competing viewpoints, and create a recommendation.	H Argumentation, rhetoric S Persuasion, empathy, judgment	Civic engagement, advocacy, leadership
04	**Book report**	**Interpretive Knowledge Construction**	Reading comprehension, interpretation, evidence	Students analyze character decisions, themes, and connections to contemporary issues.	H Literary analysis, textual evidence S Empathy, perspective-taking	Understanding narratives, human behavior, cultural awareness
05	**Reading response**	**Critical Meaning-Making**	Comprehension, inference, interpretation	Students respond to competing interpretations and support their conclusions with textual evidence.	H Close reading, interpretation S Reflection, critical thinking	Evaluating messages, interpreting information
06	**Discussion post**	**Critical Knowledge Exchange**	Dialogue, comprehension, reasoned interaction	Students exchange evidence-based perspectives, respond to counterarguments, and synthesize collective understanding.	H Digital communication, evidence use S Collaboration, active listening	Team discussions, online professional collaboration
07	**Reflection journal**	**Metacognitive Learning Narrative**	Self-awareness, learning growth, reflection	Students document how their understanding changed, identify challenges, and establish improvement goals.	H Reflective writing, goal tracking S Self-regulation, adaptability	Professional growth, self-evaluation
08	**Science lab report**	**Evidence-to-Explanation Inquiry**	Scientific reasoning, interpretation, evidence	Students analyze experimental data, compare explanations, evaluate AI-generated hypotheses, and defend conclusions.	H Data analysis, scientific method S Problem-solving, precision	Scientific inquiry, quality assurance, technical reporting
09	**History essay**	**Historical Evidence Reconstruction**	Source analysis, contextual understanding, interpretation	Students compare primary sources, challenge historical interpretations, and develop evidence-based explanations.	H Primary-source analysis, chronology S Perspective-taking, judgment	Historical research, civic literacy, policy analysis
10	**Creative writing**	**Creative Knowledge Expression**	Originality, narrative design, communication	Students develop original narratives, compare storytelling approaches, and reflect on creative decisions.	H Story structure, language S Creativity, imagination	Storytelling, marketing, media creation
11	**Career exploration report**	**Future-Ready Career Inquiry**	Research, self-assessment, career understanding	Students investigate careers, analyze changing skills, evaluate AI-related workplace trends, and create career pathways.	H Career research, digital literacy S Planning, adaptability	Career preparation, lifelong learning
12	**Capstone or senior project**	**Applied Competency Demonstration**	Integration and transfer of knowledge	Students solve a community or practical problem, produce a solution, and defend their process and decisions.	H Project management, research S Leadership, collaboration	Workplace projects, entrepreneurship, community solutions

THE CARDS

One assignment at a time

Read down the left edge for the argument, across for the design. The last two blocks are the ones people skip — and the ones that matter most.

01 Five-paragraph essay

→ *Cognitive Composition*

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Organization of thought, argumentation, communication

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students investigate an issue, build an argument map, critique suggested structures, and explain their reasoning.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Writing, argument structure S Critical thinking, communication

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Persuasive communication, proposals, advocacy

— *A grant writer maps a funder's priorities before drafting a single paragraph.*

— *A contractor writes a change order that explains why the fix costs more and what happens if it is not approved.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A claim that survives one challenge from a classmate without collapsing.

02 Research report

→ *Evidence-Based Knowledge Construction*

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Research literacy, source evaluation, synthesis

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students investigate a real-world question, compare sources, verify AI-supported claims, and create a supported explanation.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Research, citation, information literacy S Analytical thinking, curiosity

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Investigating problems, evaluating online information

— *A nurse checks three sources before agreeing to change a wound-care protocol.*

— *A purchasing officer compares vendor claims against independent test data before signing anything.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

Two sources that disagree, plus a stated reason for trusting one over the other.

03 Persuasive essay

→ ***Intellectual Position Development***

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Evidence-based persuasion and reasoning

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students examine a community issue, consider competing viewpoints, and create a recommendation.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Argumentation, rhetoric S Persuasion, empathy, judgment

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Civic engagement, advocacy, leadership

— *A city planner recommends a bike lane by naming who gains, who loses, and what it costs.*

— *A sales lead tells a client why the cheaper option is the wrong one for them.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

The strongest objection to their own position, stated fairly enough that a skeptic nods.

04 Book report

→ ***Interpretive Knowledge Construction***

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Reading comprehension, interpretation, evidence

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students analyze character decisions, themes, and connections to contemporary issues.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Literary analysis, textual evidence S Empathy, perspective-taking

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Understanding narratives, human behavior, cultural awareness

— *A product manager reads customer complaints for what people mean, not just what they wrote.*

— *A hospice aide recognizes the fear behind an angry question from a family member.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A quotation that supports an interpretation they did not start with.

05 Reading response

→ *Critical Meaning-Making*

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Comprehension, inference, interpretation

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students respond to competing interpretations and support their conclusions with textual evidence.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Close reading, interpretation S Reflection, critical thinking

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Evaluating messages, interpreting information

— *An analyst reads two articles about the same study and notices they disagree on the number.*

— *A compliance officer reads a memo for what it carefully does not say.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

Two readings of the same passage, and a defense of the better one.

06 Discussion post

→ *Critical Knowledge Exchange*

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Dialogue, comprehension, reasoned interaction

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students exchange evidence-based perspectives, respond to counterarguments, and synthesize collective understanding.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Digital communication, evidence use S Collaboration, active listening

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Team discussions, online professional collaboration

— *A project team resolves a disagreement in the meeting instead of splitting into two side threads.*

— *A customer service representative restates a complaint until the customer says, that is exactly it.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A reply that visibly changes something in the original post.

07 Reflection journal

→ *Metacognitive Learning Narrative*

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Self-awareness, learning growth, reflection

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students document how their understanding changed, identify challenges, and establish improvement goals.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Reflective writing, goal tracking S Self-regulation, adaptability

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Professional growth, self-evaluation

— *An apprentice electrician keeps a log of every mistake and what caused it.*

— *A new manager reviews a failed project and names the one decision they would remake.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A named error, a named cause, and evidence of a later change.

08 Science lab report

→ *Evidence-to-Explanation Inquiry*

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Scientific reasoning, interpretation, evidence

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students analyze experimental data, compare explanations, evaluate AI-generated hypotheses, and defend conclusions.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Data analysis, scientific method S Problem-solving, precision

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Scientific inquiry, quality assurance, technical reporting

— *A quality technician explains an out-of-spec batch instead of only flagging it.*

— *A pharmacy technician questions a dose that looks right on the label but wrong for the patient.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A result that surprised them, and an honest attempt to explain why.

09 History essay

→ ***Historical Evidence Reconstruction***

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Source analysis, contextual understanding, interpretation

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students compare primary sources, challenge historical interpretations, and develop evidence-based explanations.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Primary-source analysis, chronology S Perspective-taking, judgment

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Historical research, civic literacy, policy analysis

— *A claims adjuster reads two witness statements and decides which one the physical evidence supports.*

— *A journalist verifies the date of a viral photograph before publishing it.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

Two sources that conflict, with the conflict explained rather than smoothed over.

10 Creative writing

→ ***Creative Knowledge Expression***

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Originality, narrative design, communication

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students develop original narratives, compare storytelling approaches, and reflect on creative decisions.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Story structure, language S Creativity, imagination

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Storytelling, marketing, media creation

— *A marketing associate writes six versions of one product description for six audiences.*

— *A trainer turns a dry policy into a story new hires still remember a year later.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A revision they can explain in terms of its effect on a reader.

11 Career exploration report

→ ***Future-Ready Career Inquiry***

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Research, self-assessment, career understanding

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students investigate careers, analyze changing skills, evaluate AI-related workplace trends, and create career pathways.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Career research, digital literacy S Planning, adaptability

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Career preparation, lifelong learning

— *A job seeker reads ten postings for one title and finds the three skills that repeat in all ten.*

— *A worker whose role is being automated identifies the adjacent job their skills already fit.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A named pathway with the next concrete step attached to it.

12 Capstone or senior project

→ ***Applied Competency Demonstration***

WHAT WE ARE ACTUALLY MEASURING

Integration and transfer of knowledge

HOW WE REDESIGN THE LEARNING ACTIVITY

Students solve a community or practical problem, produce a solution, and defend their process and decisions.

HARD SKILLS / SOFT SKILLS

H Project management, research S Leadership, collaboration

WHY THE WORLD NEEDS IT

Workplace projects, entrepreneurship, community solutions

— *A community organizer pitches a solution to a skeptical town council and takes their questions.*

— *An intern defends a recommendation to a manager who has already decided otherwise.*

EVIDENCE TO LOOK FOR

A defense under questioning, not a slide deck.

YOUR TURN

The blank card

Print this page. Fill it in by hand for one assignment you are teaching this term. Bring it to your next PLC or department meeting — not the plan, the card.

What I assign now	
What the student is actually being asked to build	
Hard skills	
Soft skills	
Where the shortcut lives	
How I will redesign the activity	
Why the world needs it — two places this shows up at work	
Evidence I will look for	

A sentence to keep: *if the assignment can be completed without the capability, it was never measuring the capability.*

We work with institutions to redesign and reimagine learning content.

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