

Dr. Mishkat Al Moumin:
What Happens After Graduation Is the Real Measure



[On the Road Again](#) is an exclusive monthly feature on our Roadmap 2031 initiative, written by Dr. Mishkat Al Moumin, a leading voice in thought leadership on the future of public education. We house her collective work on our dedicated [On the Road Again](#) page. Follow her there!

A diploma is often treated as the finish line. It is not. It is a handoff.

Students walk across a stage, receive a certificate, and leave with the expectation that they are ready. Ready for work, for college, for life. The question is simple: ready for what, exactly?

Graduation rates answer whether students completed school. They do not answer whether school prepared them.

A student can graduate on time and still struggle to navigate a workplace, manage responsibilities, or make informed decisions. Another may leave with direction, skills, and the ability to adapt, even if the path is not linear. The difference does not show up in a final transcript.

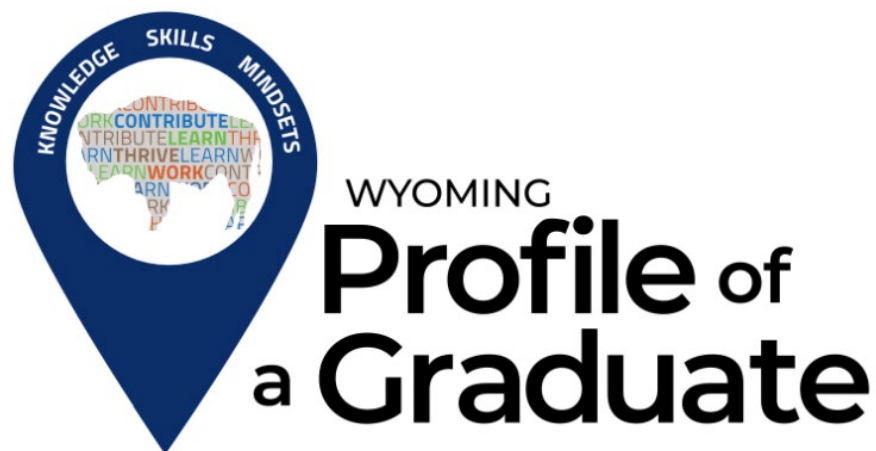
The focus on test scores is too narrow.

What happens after graduation tells the real story. Where do students go one year later? Are they employed, enrolled, or still searching? Do they stay in their field or change direction quickly? Do employers see value in their preparation? Do students feel capable of moving forward without constant guidance?

These questions are often dismissed with a familiar response: tracking students is not allowed due to privacy laws.

Privacy laws set boundaries. They do not prevent understanding outcomes.

States already use systems such as the National Student Clearinghouse to track college enrollment and persistence. Schools build alumni networks. Career and technical education programs follow certification completion and job placement. Employers provide feedback through partnerships. Graduates return and share their experiences. Outcome data exists. The issue is not access. The issue is whether it is used.



In Wyoming, districts are connecting education to life beyond school through the Profile of a Graduate and the RIDE initiative. Students are not only completing courses. They are engaging in performance-based assessments that require them to apply knowledge in real-world tasks. Students present their work, make decisions, and connect learning across subjects. Career pathways are linked to certifications, workforce entry, and continued education. The goal is not only to graduate students, but to prepare them to move forward with direction and skill.

The Wyoming approach changes the question.

Instead of asking whether a student passed, the focus shifts to whether the student can do the work, adapt to change, and contribute in a real setting.

Evaluating whether students can do the work, adapt to change, and contribute in real settings requires different signals.

Employment in a chosen field. Completion of a certification. Persistence in college. Feedback from employers. The ability to manage responsibilities without supervision. These outcomes take time to track, but they provide a clearer picture of readiness.

Tracking outcomes does not require complex systems. Schools can start with simple, consistent practices. An alumni association can keep graduates connected and provide periodic updates on education and employment. A dedicated webpage can highlight verified graduate outcomes and success stories. Graduates can contribute short reflections or blog posts describing what helped them and what gaps they experienced. Career and technical programs can maintain contact with industry partners to confirm placements and skill alignment. These approaches respect privacy while creating a steady flow of real information that can inform instruction and program design.



Short-term metrics are easier to collect. Long-term outcomes are harder to ignore.

A system that stops measuring at graduation risks celebrating completion without understanding impact. A system that follows outcomes gains the information needed to adjust, improve, and stay relevant.

Education does not end at graduation. Measurement should not end there either.

Look at the last graduating class. Where are those students today? What do those outcomes say about preparation, not just completion? Long-term outcomes are the measure that matters.

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