OESIS

The Leading Network for Innovation at Independent Schools

OESIS Learning Innovation Survey Report 2019

21ST CENTURY SCHOOLS

By Sanje Ratnavale
President
OESIS Group, Inc.

OESIS Group, Inc. © 2019
www.oesisgroup.com

Conferences · Cohorts · PD Platforms · Career Placement · Research · Digital Portfolios

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

> "This is your most important work so far. I recommend making this report a central component of faculty and leadership discussions."
>
> **Pat Bassett**
> *President NAIS 2001–2013*

> "The report is remarkable not only for its insight, but for the data in support, and for the essential questions that the report generates. It is deep. A careful reading requires a devoted commitment of time, and at least a second, if not multiple, focused review."
>
> **Steve Loy**
> *Head of School*
> Rutgers Prep School (NJ)

> "OESIS Learning Innovation Report helps Chadwick School to affirm the significance of the trends we are seeing and the directions we are moving in. By placing our pedagogical priorities in the context of nation-wide developments, we are better able to support new initiatives in conversations with teachers, families, donors, and the Board of Trustees."
>
> **Dr. Deborah Dowling**
> *Assistant Head for Academic Affairs*
> Chadwick School (CA)

> "This report again shows that few have the perspective afforded by the many OESIS network thrusts from research to recruitment and PD. It gets to the root of underlying assumptions with unique grass-roots insights on educational innovation. Well done."
>
> **Ray Ravaglia**
> *Founder,* Stanford Online High School
> *Chief Learning Officer,* Opportunity Education (CA)

> "The 2019 OESIS Innovation Report provides a high quality and deep-dive analysis of the most important educational challenges that will ultimately enable pedagogical reform. For the first time, independent schools have a roadmap to best meet the learning needs of our students in a manner that will equip them with key skills for success in the 21st century."
>
> **Joel Backon**
> *Director of Academic Technology/History*
> Choate Rosemary Hall (CT)

CONTENTS

Our third independent school sector Innovation Report draws on the data from a broad spectrum of sources: our latest Innovation Survey conducted in 2018, the 200+ OESIS-XP platform webinars we have conducted over the last two years in 2017 and 2018 with teachers across the U.S., the hundreds of job interviews for our placement service OESIS Career Confidential, as well as six additional conferences since the last report, now approaching 20 since 2013. We believe these sources give us a pretty unique touch on the pulse of innovation across independent schools in the U.S. Table I below tracks very closely the responses of the last two reports, suggesting that we are comparing again a very similar group of schools:

Table 1. The three most important outcomes parents want for their children

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Strong sense of emotional well being and confidence	1		262	120
A student rounded in all academic disciplines	2		236	113
Reputation of college attended	3		139	69
Appreciation for diversity	4		69	41
A student rounded in the knowledge of the liberal arts	5		65	39
Strong employment prospects after a successful college career	6		50	26
A student well grounded in STEM	7		25	15

Lowest Rank   Highest Rank

OESIS is a dynamic network of over 600 independent schools and thousands of connected innovators in education. Our network focuses on the innovative practices in pedagogy, curriculum development, assessment and school culture change. While we began with a focus on online learning, we have evolved to all areas of student-centered learning including Project-Based Learning, Competency, STEAM, Design Thinking, Problem-Based Learning, Blended Learning, Inquiry-Driven Models, and more.

INTRODUCTION

As the tables show, 90% of our respondent schools belong to national or regional independent school associations, close to 50% of respondents are at the Head of School level, the profile of grade levels served, tuition levels and average enrollment broadly correlates with the make-up of schools in the sector. The survey data is based on 142 completed school surveys: this is our third survey and we sought to explore in more depth the areas of skills development.

Table 2. Survey respondents by school affiliation
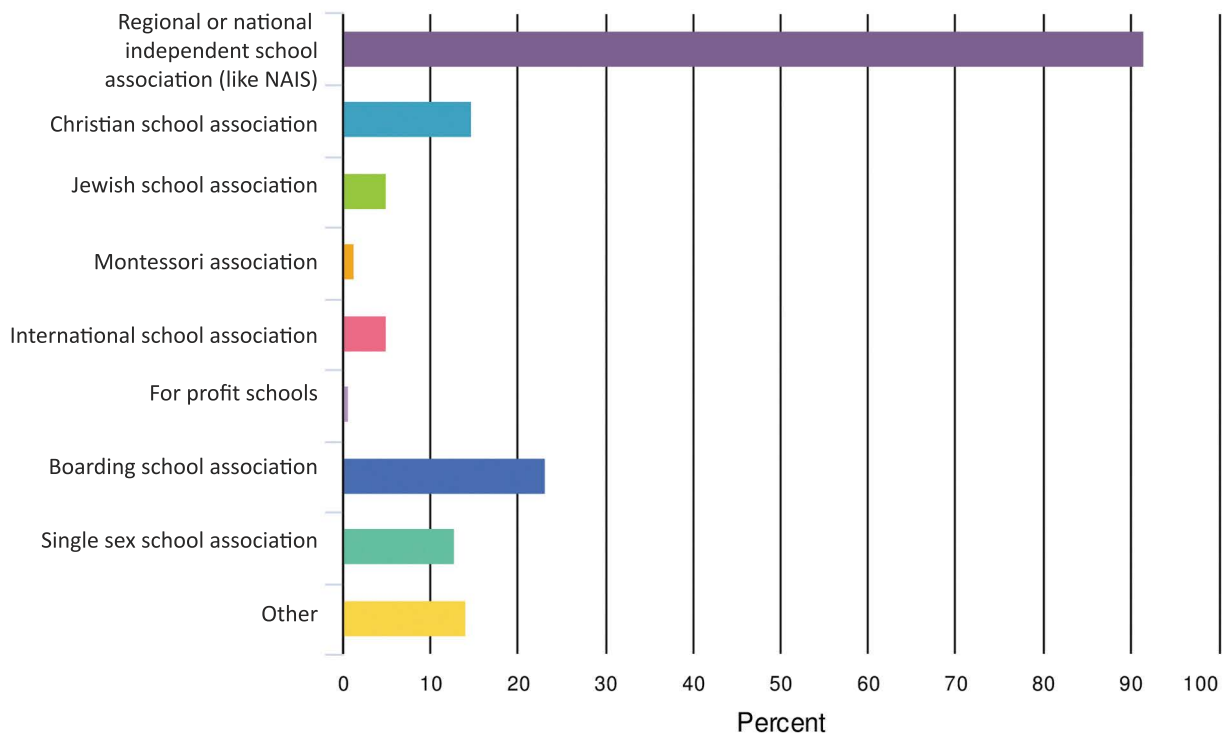
Table 3. Survey respondents by title and role
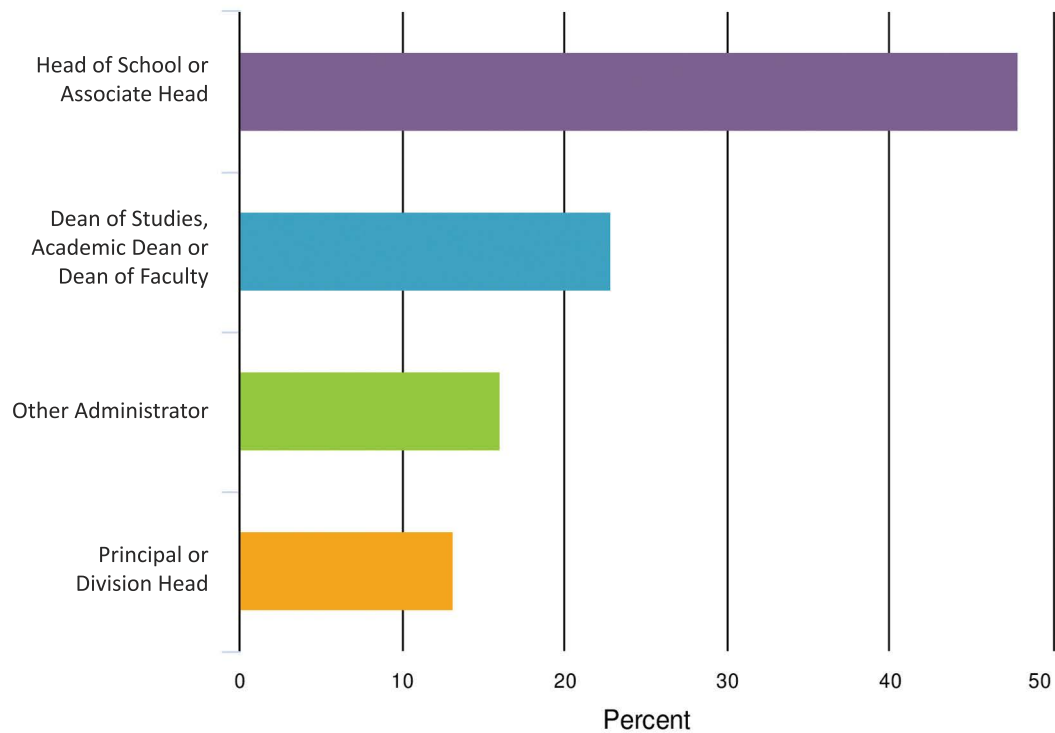
Table 4. Survey respondents by tuition range
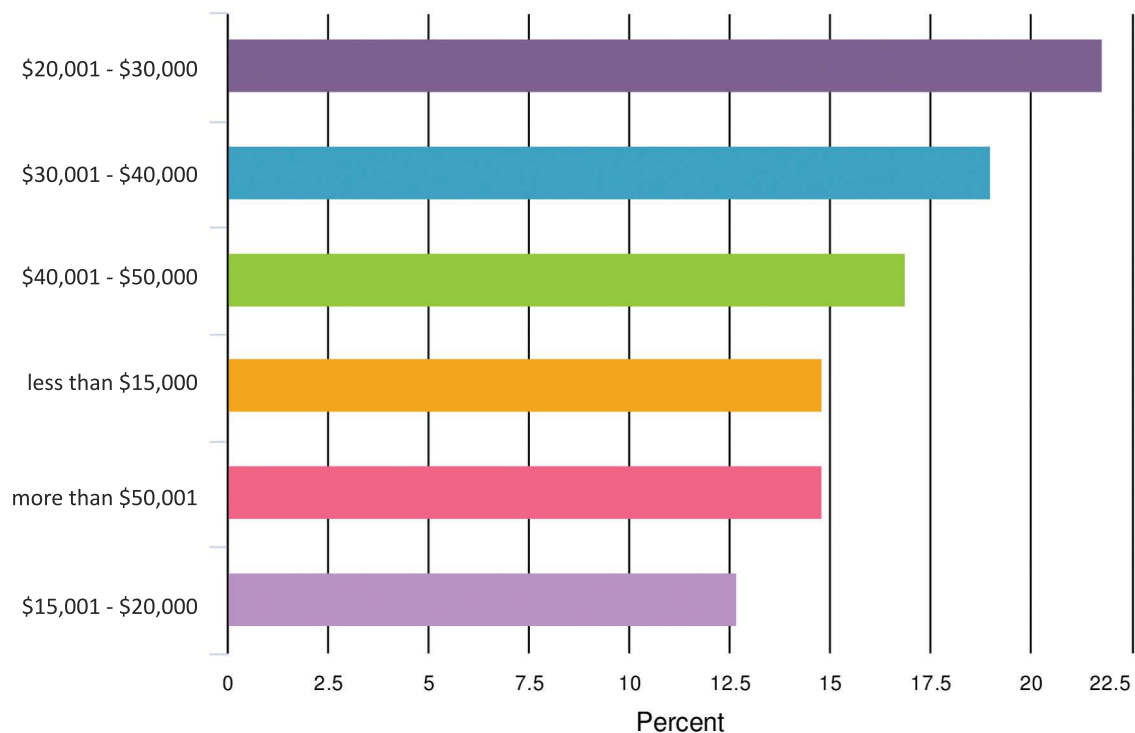
Table 5. Survey respondents by enrollment
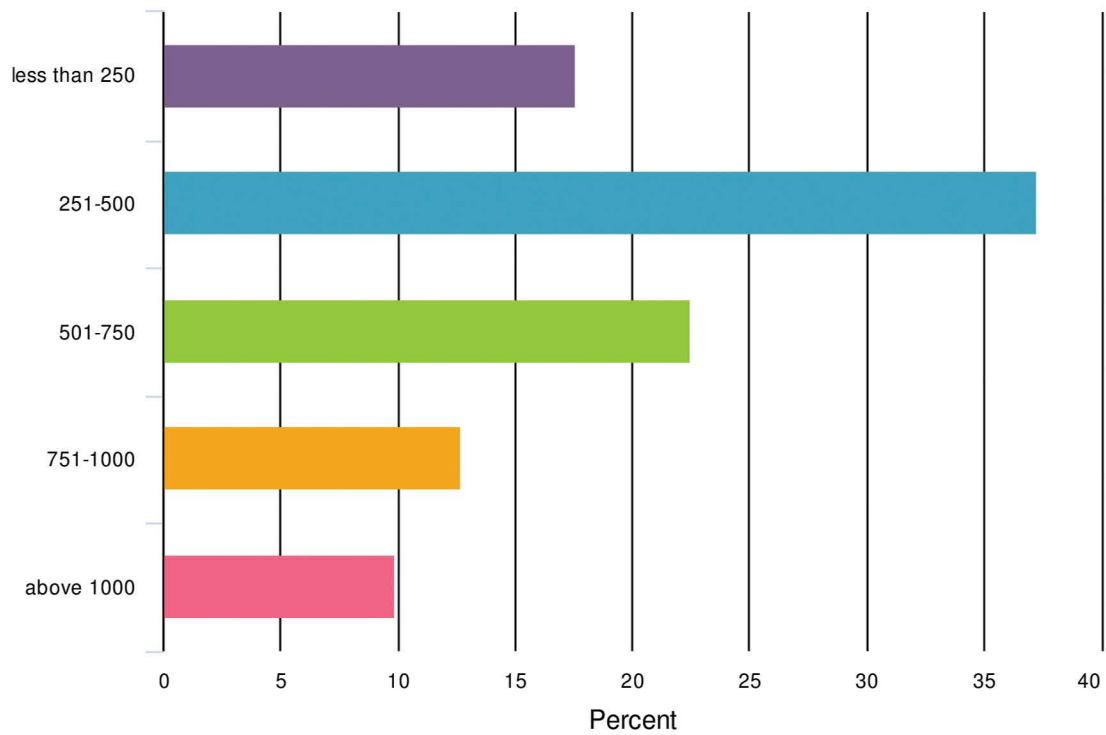
Table 6: Survey respondents by grades served
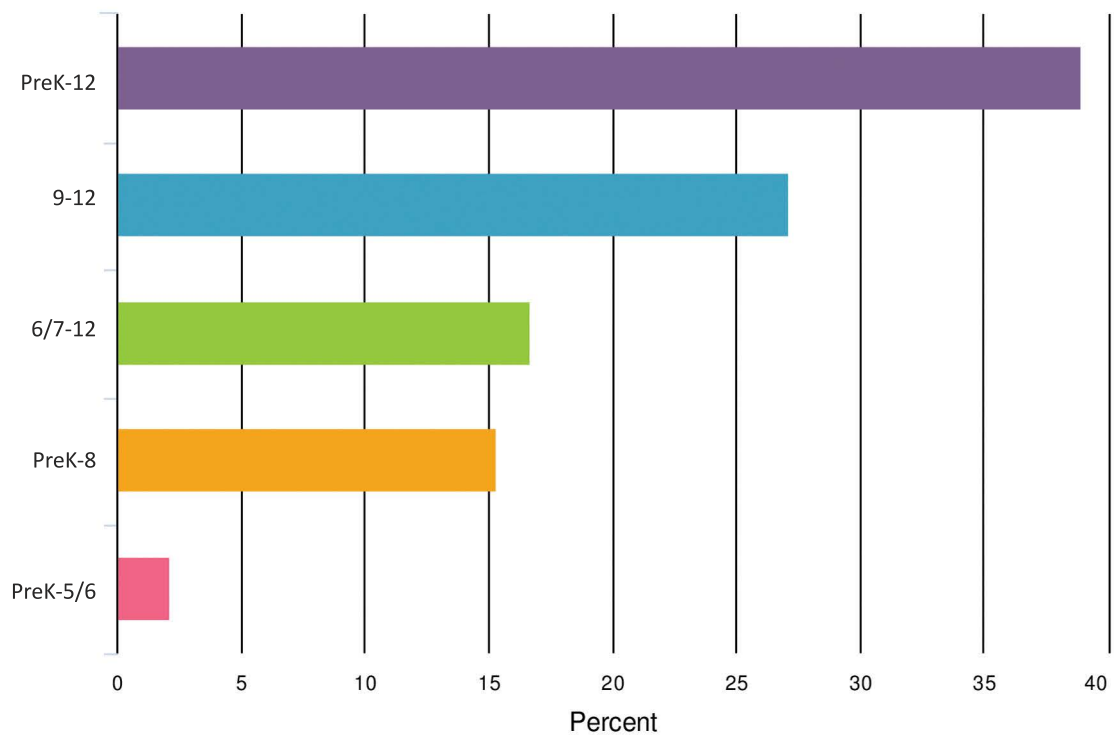
Economists will tell you that transformative trends often take a trajectory of little-noticed effect, followed by a sudden awakening. The result is a major outcome, seemingly out of nowhere, like a housing downturn, a financial crisis or a banking meltdown. We are two decades into the new century and such an awakening seems imminent in our minds. Strong indicative evidence of this can be found in the survey data concerning the exploding importance of PBL, the institutional commitments in the next 3-5 years to skills and competency definition, and a realization that schools are not serving large constituencies in an optimal manner, with the results showing up in student health and anxiety. We will explore why the time is right for an educational revolution in independent schools to finally begin, two decades into this century, what misunderstandings continue to confound it in certain quarters, and what it will ultimately require to succeed.

The first two decades have also been characterized by a series of movements in education, all of which have failed to live up to their hype or potential:

1) the accountability efforts of No Child Left Behind;

2) the potential of online learning and the opportunities of blended learning;

3) the standards-driven and data initiatives surrounding the Common Core;

4) the failure of PBL and constructivism to penetrate into the mainstream despite their widescale acceptance of value in deeper learning;

5) the now-bankrupt $100 million attempt to bring all student data under one Gates Foundation funded umbrella called InBloom; and

6) of course, the never-ending over-exuberance for technology to transform learning without proper integration into practice.

In the process, educational buzzwords like "differentiation" or "adaptive learning" and even "personalization" are already looking a little tired: it's the "-ization" rather than the "personal" that is in focus. In this report, we use the data from the sources detailed in the introduction to give our assessment of the opportunities and challenges for independent schools.

Innovation proliferates systemically when it is rooted in what worked well in the past. It draws deeply from much of what it is trying to improve. But instead of finding new ways to deliver old solutions, innovation must find new ways to solve perennial problems and adapt to the changes in the cultural landscape. Furthermore, being open to school-wide possibilities is key to avoiding an uneven and spotty trajectory of innovation. Sadly, much of the innovation at independent schools has been implemented without

such consistency, as one observes with new initiatives or new facilities. Maker spaces are good examples of such a new initiative as Table 32 shows, where there is little utilization by teachers outside of those responsible for the facility. Often catering to the marketing "arms race" mentality of school leadership and boards, cosmetic changes represent a failure that undermines more effective approaches. Equally, celebrating teachers who are adopting innovative student-centered methods while adopting the mantra that ultimately "everyone has their way to innovate" (in keeping with the independent school tradition of independence) is another school-wide, innovation-undermining mentality. Teachers perceive this scenario as a lack of coherent vision on the part of administrators, and wait for their direction or inspiration. They do not see the emerging areas of innovation as rooted in the culture because a campaign of culture change does not accompany them.

The headline of this report and the last two years is that the Competency-Based Education (CBE) movement has arrived at independent schools, and with it a path for its natural complement, Project-Based Learning (PBL). The survey data (see Tables 7 and 8) suggests that within 3 years 31% of independent schools will have defined a set of competencies and attributed them to each course (up from 17% today), and within 5 years that number will be 48%. This calculation is computed by first looking at Table 7 which asks who has defined and attributed competencies to each course, and then using Table 8, asking their timeline for completion by identifying those still in the process (the blue bar in the first Table 7).

Table 7: Has your school defined a set of competencies for student achievement infused and identifiable throughout your curriculum? For example, competencies might include larger grain size goals such as critical thinking, collaboration or global-mindedness.
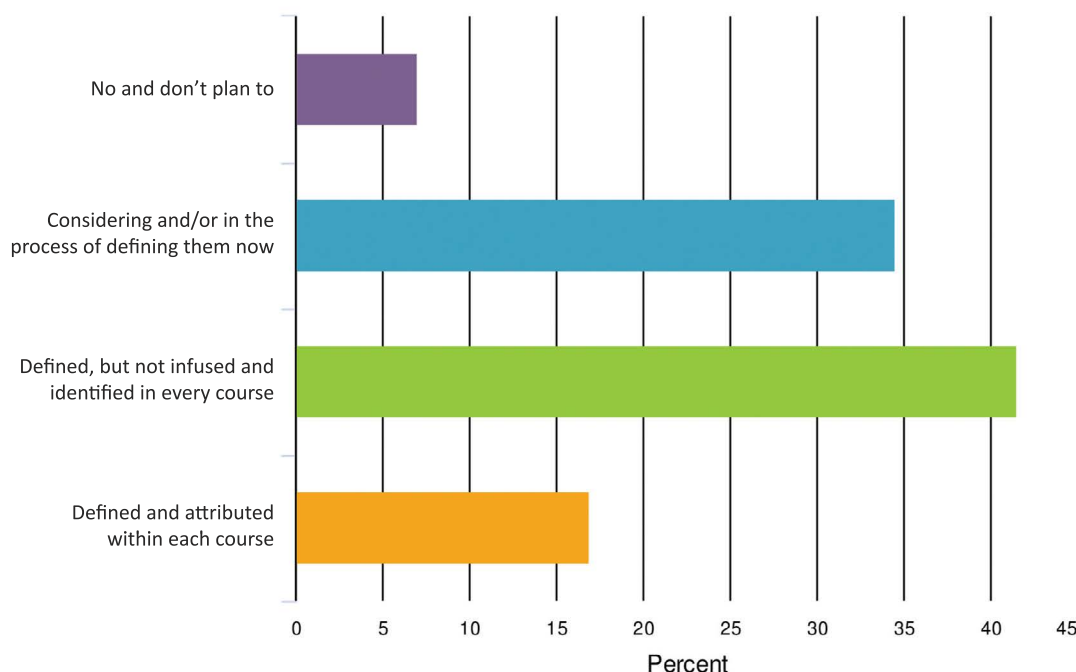
Table 8. When do you think this might be completed?
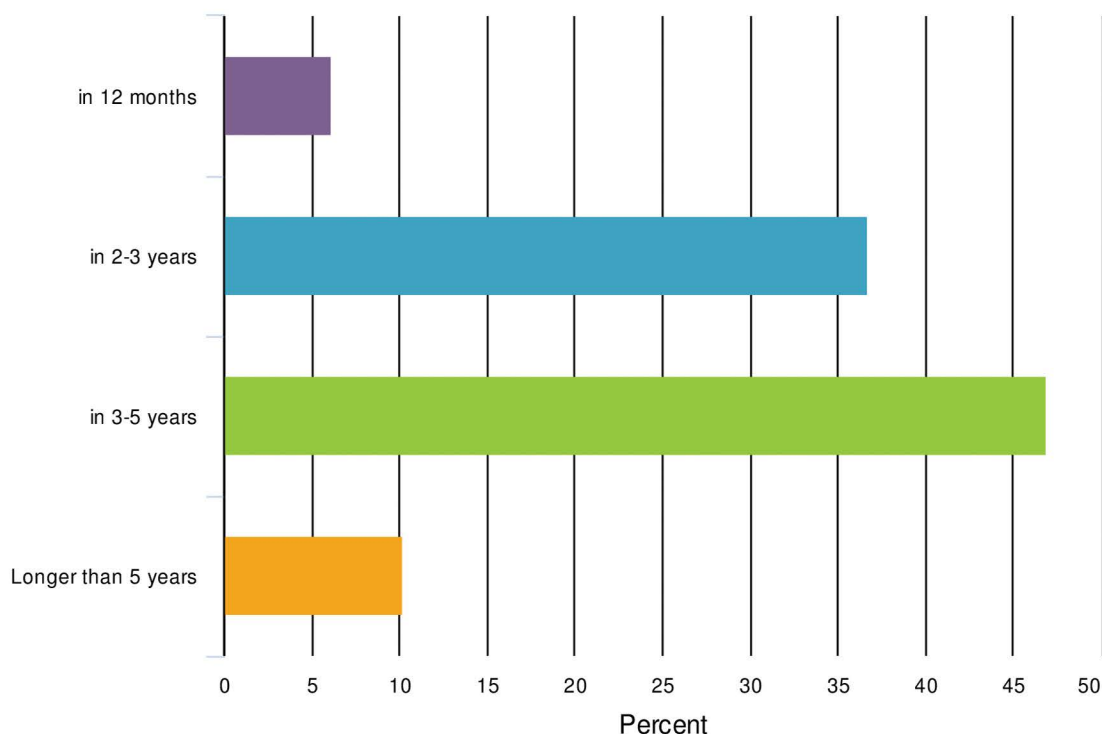
What is a Competency and what is CBE?

A competency is a set of large-grain types of skills or habits (Communication, Character, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Creativity). The sum total of these skills adds up to an innovator's mindset tied to a set of supporting skills (meta-skills) and supporting content that can be practiced in a discipline-specific context or transferred into an inter-disciplinary context: it has no standard trajectory or sequence, but can be tracked. Those skills or habits enable greater self-assessment and/or meta-cognition, can be cultured formatively (but also summatively), and are assessed by performance tasks (performance indicators). Competency-Based Education is ultimately an assessment system with significant implications for curriculum, pedagogy, scope and sequence.

Although this is simply a beginning to lay the groundwork for a very long journey, it is actually remarkable. Ten years ago if you had asked the same question using the contemporary public school equivalent acronym, ESLRs (Expected School-Wide Learning Results), the results would have been significantly different. The data on PBL has also changed significantly, with 78% of schools expecting that they would integrate PBL "a fair amount" or "a lot" in their programming within 5 years. Those responses represent a 28% increase from our last report in 2017 (see Table 9).

Table 9. In five years, to what degree would PBL or PRBL have taken hold at your school?
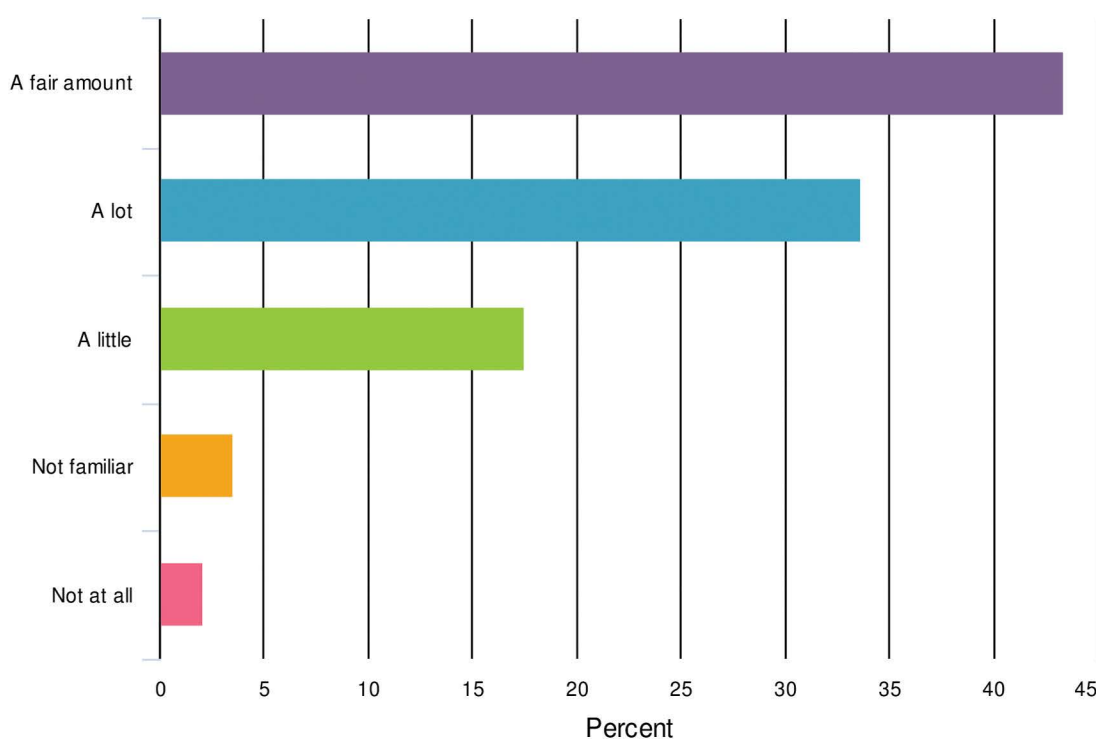
CBE has awakened a realization that what is good in the old can be improved upon and ultimately lead to school-wide cohesive innovation and change. It can address the issue of school relevance. It operates independently of departments, grade levels, divisions, and even significant reliance on content. It draws on fundamental skills that have been ingrained forever in independent and public school curricula like Critical Thinking, Communication and Character. It still keeps the teacher and school in an important role (albeit more formative) for the childhood journey of learning. And it meets the recognized need for schools not just to have a sense of who their students should be when they graduate, but what they are able to do.

To get there, CBE has to throw off misunderstandings and provide meaningful solutions to the following sclerotic associations, which we believe it most certainly can in independent school contexts. The misunderstandings are the following: that it will "dumb down" the curriculum and offer limited opportunities for keeping expectations high; that it will move to the elimination of grades (more on that later) and lead to a pass/fail context that is ripe with assessment inflation or invalidity; that it is skill-centric only and seeks to eliminate important content; and that it represents a public school-driven standards-based approach with strong correlations to age appropriateness. We examine later in the report how schools are realizing that many of these objections are illusory or misguided.

> **Deborah Dowling,** *Assistant Head for Academic Affairs,* **Chadwick School** (CA): *"OESIS resources are used more and more by Chadwick's department chairs, as they lead our teachers into competency-based education, standards-based grading, and assessment of meta-skills. We began with ideas brought home from OESIS conferences, and now we are diving into the online tools: from webinars to portfolios. OESIS supports our conversations about the long-term purpose and the practical meaning of curriculum and assessment."*

There are then four major features or elements of CBE that we are convinced will lead to this awakening and then to the acceleration of the process of school transformation. And despite the strong advocacy of some organizations, these features do not necessarily include the elimination of grades; many public school CBE approaches, particularly in New England where the movement is most mature, still encompass GPAs. Why? Because schools are not private islands, and put more simply, we need to play well with others including colleges.

The features of CBE for independent schools that have not yet been well-promoted are: (a) its capacity for enabling incremental change; (b) its ability to serve as a conduit to inter-disciplinary learning and thereby relevance; (c) its capacity for making projects more extensive and immersive because they are not content- or theme-only driven, buttressed by inter-disciplinary structures and faculty buy-in; and (d) the capacity of CBE and PBL together to redefine the word "equity." These features merit a few words in this Executive Summary, before diving deeper into the report. Cohesive change, even incremental in nature, can be a tall order for most independent schools.

Few industries are afforded the luxury of incremental change, but then few industries have as hard a time defining their present customer and have as many different constituencies to serve. A reflection of this reality is the strategic plans that schools produce, which look laughable at first glance to those outside of education because of their 10,000-feet indicators of accountability. They reflect, however, one major

reality: the power to change lies not just in the willingness, but also in the capacity, of its labor force to buy into its need. That labor force often has little confidence that its board leadership, albeit well-intentioned, understands much about educational practice or reality, and so the latest board-driven initiative is regarded with tolerance at best in the hope that "this too shall pass." The evidence can be found in the countless strategic plans that from the early 1990's onwards have mentions of creating a 21st century curriculum or other such euphemisms without much effect. A true incremental framework, that can touch every part of a school from athletics to academics, is therefore a rarity. CBE is just that, and as mentioned earlier, it draws on roots of what has historically made the school excellent in its own way rather than by offering some feature of access, tool, or additional choice as its central driver.

Schools have also been hamstrung by the fact that siloed courses do not reflect the reality of life in the future for their students, and they diminish relevance and therefore student buy-in. The problem again comes back to faculty and academic administrators. How do schools encourage the growth of inter-disciplinary courses? The natural starting point would be a historical shared context or a thematic intersection, but again this represents a nice sequential packaging that is teacher-centered and does not reflect the reality of real world life and problems. Enter CBE, which does something that is new institutionally. It provides a framework of shared large-grain competencies like "Communication" or "Character" with their associated meta-skills or performance indicators. A course then becomes less content- or theme-driven and can provide more student

pathways for exploration: and all of this still within a learning and assessment umbrella of established learning objectives called competencies. Second, it can use as a starting point a student idea or passion rather than be teacher defined. It can begin with a broad inquiry-driven trajectory. The learning is therefore a function of correlations with the spectrum of competencies rather than the product or a summative endpoint. CBE acts as a curriculum can opener.

CBE thirdly provides a conduit to deeper PBL because inter-disciplinary endeavors are naturally project-based. By doing so it moves the pedagogical needle further towards student-centered and away from traditional teacher-driven instruction. It enables greater depth in competencies by making student agency central. Under these pedagogical contexts, the competencies really come to life and require a more formative mindset on the part of the teacher. PBL also requires a lot more and different teacher preparation, more comfort with uneven pacing and new ways of assessment, and ultimately a commitment to the modernization of the teacher role. These mixed-context project-based situations are the realities of 21st century life, and although it is not the role of schools to prepare students for the workforce, there is no denying that real-world contexts are great motivators. This can be seen in the explosion of social causes and entrepreneurship taking place in co-curricular contexts at our schools.

The final feature of CBE for independent schools is scarcely acknowledged or even understood, and that is its impact on student equity today. The term "equity" is frequently misunderstood or confused with diversity and inclusion. These words are bandied about like they are natural consequences of each other. In the 20th century, equity in an academic context was often associated with accommodations and learning differences or resource support for students who are injected into a sequence for which they were lacking skills as a result of their prior experience. Certainly this definition of equity and associated strategies still has value. However, within the highly polarized and political world we are living in today, it touches curriculum bias, as well as curriculum readiness: key questions are now being raised on the underlying assumptions that our curriculum embraces, whether we continue to embed racism or minority suppression by teaching a thematic unit of some kind and embedding a historically biased thematic narrative. In the middle of all of this is an increasingly conflicted teacher afraid to open his/her mouth without couching views in some way. By enabling PBL, CBE provides another alternative to the equity equation. Every student has different starting points. By "accommodating" these different starting points into an activity, one enables the child at his or her personal context rather than making assumptions regarding preparedness or mindset. It does not require the school or teacher to develop custom curricula for individuals or groups of students by artificially creating scenarios they will not encounter in life. In short, every student is on the same geometric plane, but in different locations. They all strive for the same endpoint.

OESIS

Representing 600+ prestigious independent schools across the U.S.

The Leading Network for Innovation at Independent Schools

OESIS Career Confidential provides placement services for innovative teachers and mid-management educators with PBL, Mastery, Competency, Blending, STEM, Design Thinking, Experiential, Globalization, Tech-intensive, Research-based, Honors and Inter-Disciplinary experience.

Register online at www.oesiscareers.com

INNOVATIVE CANDIDATES FOR INNOVATING SCHOOLS

FREE 1 YEAR OF OESIS PD FOR EVERY HIRE

REINVENTING FACULTY RECRUITMENT
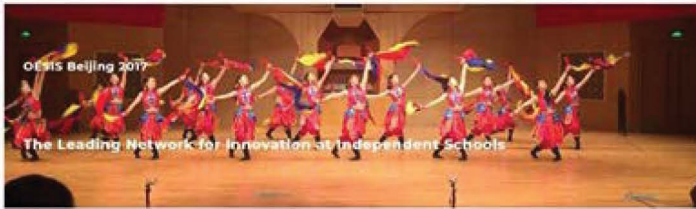
INNOVATIVE CANDIDATES & INNOVATING SCHOOLS | FREE 1 YEAR OESIS PD | PLACEMENT | BEST FILTERS | LOWER COST
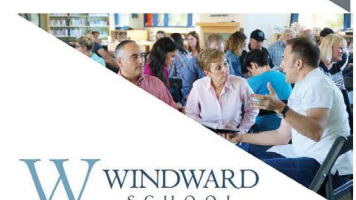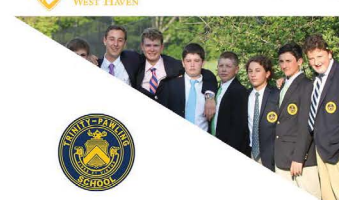
A final summary comment on CBE and PBL before moving onto the challenges for schools. It is the view of OESIS that there will be fundamental differences in the trajectory of these movements in independent schools. The factors that will determine these trajectories are the following:

(a) their approach to assessment validity, with certain initiatives and schools taking the purist position that performance areas or rubrics should never be standardized (see Table below) and presumably then not benchmarked; and others taking a Mission Skills or indexing approach to the underlying meta-skills. The risk of the former is competency/mastery credit inflation, with the latter benefit being that the individual's journey is very much mapped in a school-specific context;

Table 10. How will you ensure assessment of proficiency levels will have a correlation between your teachers or peer schools and not lead to the same grade inflation we have seen in schools over the last 20 years in letter grades?
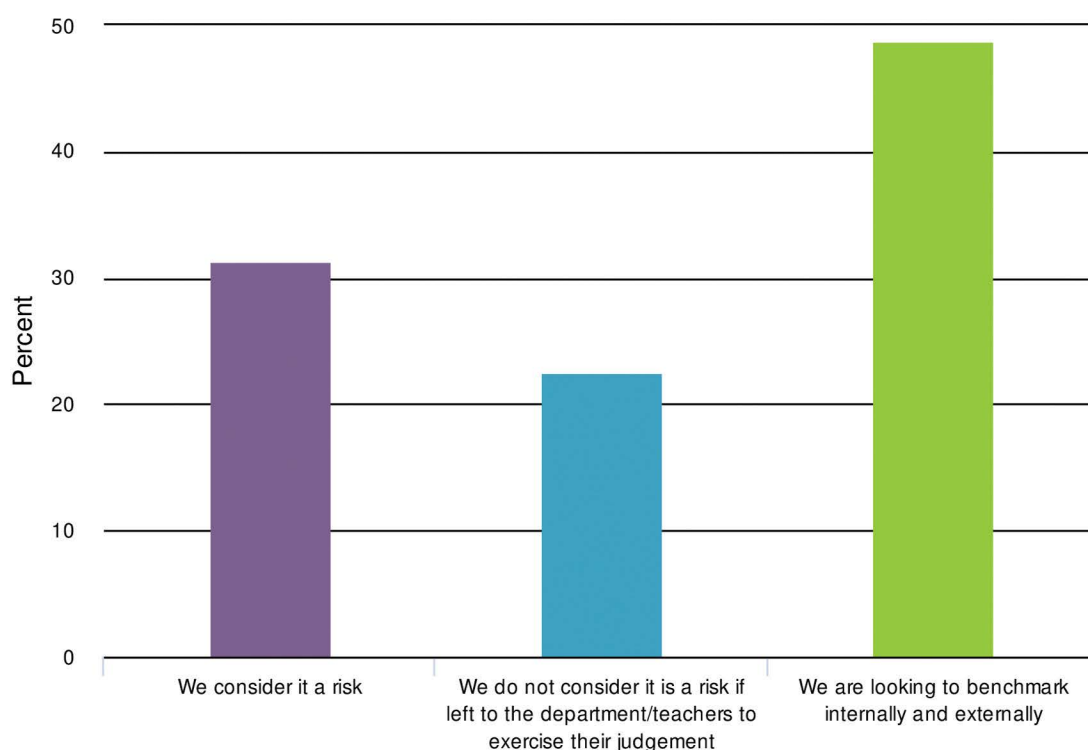
(b) schools without the constituency buy-in will try and follow a school within a school approach, a side-by-side micro-school approach, or a dual-track solution with one track on a traditional grade route and others on a performance credit route: this mixed messaging will send dangerous signals about the other track or approach and, in the view of OESIS, should be avoided;

(c) some schools will stall at the 5-7 year mark when major decisions around recalibrating the disciplinary/inter-disciplinary mix will come to the fore with important decisions around schedule, the type of transcript, and human resources allocation. Those schools will continue a more standards-based approach that equates with most public school trajectories; and

(d) schools that crossover to the Goldilocks zone will have created significant intellectual property and will recoup handsomely their investment in professional development through a leadership role for their brands. These schools will have invested heavily in the cultural switch that needs to be made. Robert Marzano talks convincingly in our minds about how schools are like air-traffic controllers, in charge of mission critical systems: we agree. As schools start to transform their internal workings they will be looking at critical indicators of student buy-in, the teacher-/student-driven mix, yardsticks of curricular renewal, alternate student work product tools like portfolios, new admission standards and more. We outline our vision for the road map at the end of the Report.

Some schools will, of course, eschew the whole skills-based competency movement and adopt more established and programmatic co-curricular paths instead. They will refuse to be dragged into what they consider just another incarnation of the age-old skills vs content debate. They will point to the natural tendency of public school-driven standards to eliminate content. Ironically, many of these detractors are actually adherents of primitive competency-based systems; independent school accreditation is built around competency standards and self-reflection, and schools actively participate in these protocols and use them as validation of their own excellence. The standards are less performance-based or outcome-validated, but rather input-activity validated. The double irony is that the track record of independent school accreditation is that they have gravitated towards excellence inflation, with pass/fail now more akin to pass/pass. Many of the schools that have failed in the last 50 years have recent accreditations in place. This reinforces, in the opinion of OESIS, the imperative to manage benchmarking and validity carefully.

Finally, a few words on the programmatic challenges independent schools face and that we elaborate upon further in the body of this report. The one that is foremost in our minds is that schools are still struggling to understand what a 21st Century Experience involves, and think they are providing an experience when they often are not. In the next table, we asked schools to rank (yes rank), in order of their top four, which aspects would be their most important curricular and programmatic selling points. Almost at the top is "21st Century Experiences."

Table 11. Please rank in order what you think will be your four most important curricular and programmatic selling points in five years.

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Excellent Social Emotional Environments	1		279	102
21st Century Experiences	2		208	77
Teacher Knowledge & Experience	3		175	69
Course Choice & Breadth	4		165	62
Student Driven Curriculum & Program	5		158	62
Small Class Sizes	6		135	58
Peer Collaboration & Community	7		122	57
Timely Teacher Intervention & Feedback	8		107	47
Educational Technology	9		56	29

Lowest Rank   Highest Rank

Meet Sanje Ratnavale

Sanje founded OESIS in 2012 and serves as the President of what has grown to become the leading network for innovation at independent schools (with now over 600 participating in our research, conferences, cohorts, PD platforms, career placement and consulting): the acronym OESIS grew from the initial focus on Online Education Strategies for Independent Schools. He noticed that independent schools lacked both a highly collaborative national network for faculty and a pedagogical growth mindset, as many of the associations moved over decades to governance, leadership or accreditation focus and a celebration of supposedly timeless inputs.

Sanje Ratnavale, *President,* OESIS Group

He has held senior administrative positions at independent schools including Associate Head of School at a K-12 school for seven years, High School Principal for three years and CFO for seven years. Sanje has taught Latin and History at the High and Middle School levels: his educational career spans both British (Windlesham House School in Sussex) and American (Marlborough School in LA and Sierra Canyon School in LA) independent schools, schools that are boarding, single-sex and co-ed institutions respectively. He was one of three founding administrators and the financial architect of a brand new greenfield non-profit independent school built on the outskirts of Los Angeles into a K-12 institution with 850 students, a 35-acre campus and $80 million in assets during his seven-year tenure: Sanje led the raising and management of $60 million for the project from investors.

Prior to making a switch to education, Sanje spent 15 years in venture capital, investment banking and senior C-level (CEO, COO, CFO) management. He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford University (B.A. and M.A. in Law/Jurisprudence) and the British independent school system (Harrow School). Sanje is based out of Santa Monica.

Despite acknowledgement of its importance, in the minds of most schools this concept of 21st century experiences represents some co-curricular icing, some technology-enabled creativity opportunity, or some emotional community event. Press further and ask whether the academic program as a whole offers a product (a pre-packaged outcome like a college-ready graduate), a service (where something is generally delivered for consumption like through a form of direct instruction) or an experience? At best, the answer is generally that it is a service with "customization" for age, ability and affinity within an overall catalog. The 21st century has moved significantly beyond these quaint notions to an experience focused on student agency, where the customer or student is the object of changed thinking, values, priorities, etc. To coin a term, this is the "Customerization Century," where the customer or the student has the tools, and the product/ service/experience is less about output and more about its transformative effect on the student. This century commands fewer 20th century notions of experiences and more Transformation Experiences. The "product" of yesteryear has now become reflection, meta-cognition, and the opportunity to learn and grow. And in that context, schools are in the formative rather than summative business, where feedback is king.

This summary would not be complete without mentioning student wellness. The importance of this to future programming continues from our 2017 report as evidenced in Table 12. We consider this a complicated, multi-faceted problem, too easily equated with grades.

We will conclude with echoes of our previous conclusions in 2017, again validated by the survey results in the body of this report. We started OESIS because we consider the potential impact of faculty (our focus) enabling change to far exceed the potential impact of other constituencies like school leadership, boards, or accrediting agencies. Schools need to build a whole different culture of professional growth for faculty and one that necessitates them to collaborate at a level their students can, if they are to assess their students broadly. OESIS has seen a lot of innovation and great work going on around the country. Much of the low-hanging fruit of the past has now been consumed: by this I am referring to the opportunities for better access or choice or burnishing course catalogs afforded by solutions like online and flipped learning or technology opportunities that are tangentially integrated into the curriculum. Equally, for budgeting, a commitment to funding PD needs to be taken to extraordinary levels and seen as building intellectual property and an edifice of learning that will depreciate more slowly than other tangible assets. Processes and yardsticks for curricular renewal need to be on the agenda. Independent schools have the talent, wealth and independence to lead and establish their differential value. The time is ripe.

The rest of the report is structured into the following sections. The first is called "Program" and provides a picture of what the sector as a whole looks like. The remaining sections analyze our findings in Assessment, Culture, Human Resources, and Technology & Facilities. We conclude with our views on what the "Road Ahead" might look like.

3.1 Historical and Contemporary Influences

The next two charts from our research innovation reports are always the most quoted by educators, and for good reason, as together they help paint a picture of where independent schools are heading, by choice or otherwise. I say "otherwise" because if, as our first chart in the Introduction (Table 1 on desired outcomes) indicates, the leading desired outcome for a child's family is "a strong sense of emotional well-being and confidence." Schools have recognized that student wellness is a big problem and are responding to lack of student wellness as if it is an epidemic. In the first Table 12 below, we can see that two drivers of programmatic change stand out: student wellness and student agency (a desire to offer students opportunities for pursuing their passions). In both cases of student wellness and student agency, 70% of schools consider it "a lot" or "a fair amount" in influencing where their program needs to go.

Many causes have been identified for the wellness issues that are materializing in the lives and performance of students at school, including the following:

- The pressure of grades, a major justification behind the formulation of the Mastery Transcript with its absolute position of no grades, even though there are competency-based systems that encompass grades and GPAs.

- The increasing expectations on the courses required to succeed in the college process: to build a resume with a cornucopia of achievements.

- The need for students to navigate a massive course of study (with each choice a perceived risk that could forever impact student lives) that schools have felt the need to offer in justifying their price tags.

- The intersection of technology and traditional pedagogy bringing the associated distractions of social media into schools, classrooms, bedrooms, mealtimes and more, leading to greater loneliness and a higher need for personal validation.

- Parental pressures with two working-parent families more the norm, and home stresses and coddling that have been increasingly brought back to school.

- A lack of buy-in that students have any control over their lives because the significant driver of college admissions appears to be much more of a lottery, further driving the number of on- and off-campus commitments crowding the busy lives of students.

Table 12. Have the following factors or trends influenced a re-examination of the academic program at your school?

	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	A lot	Responses
Emp... Count Row %					
Negative effe... Count Row %					
Criticism of standardized... Count Row %					
Need to incorporate more inclusiv... and cultural competence Count Row %					
Acceptance of online learning opportunities Count Row %	26.				
A desire to encourage risk taking by students when they learn Count Row %	8 5.6%	38.			
A desire to offer students more independence in managing their learning Count Row %	10 7.0%	56 39.4%	60 42.3%		
A desire to offer students opportunities for pursuing their passions Count Row %	7 4.9%	37 26.1%	77 54.2%	21 14.8%	
A desire to personalize learning and differentiate instruction Count Row %	7 4.9%	47 33.1%	59 41.5%	29 20.4%	142

3.2 Programmatic Aspirations and Solutions

A solution for student wellness seems apparent from Table 13 below and gives us confidence that "the awakening" we referred to in our Summary is about to bring on major change. That solution might appear to be student agency; however, it is not to be underestimated how difficult this can be for students who have been spoon-fed their learning journey. We asked schools to project in 5 years' time what movements in programming would have taken hold. The biggest jump from two years ago is Project-Based Learning with a 27% increase showing schools think that it will have taken hold either "a lot or a fair amount" in 79% of schools.

Many schools, however, still do not understand what PBL really is in an immersive form and much of the PBL at independent schools is very much project-oriented learning. The four big programmatic horsemen from this table are very much related: PBL, Inter-Disciplinary, STEM and Experiential representing close to 80% of schools expecting them to take hold either "a lot or a fair amount" in 5 years. It is possible to have inter-disciplinary courses that are not project-based, particularly across traditionally associated subjects like English and History or Biology and Chemistry, but they can lack the real-world relevance combined with student agency that PBL environments enable. As we remarked earlier, part of this separation is due to the lack of an outcome and assessment framework of skills and competencies that traverse disciplines and departments. That is why competency-based education should be seen as the missing conduit to PBL.

Since its inception, OESIS Group has been inviting thought leaders from prestigious

independent schools to share their most innovative approaches for preparing students to

succeed in the 21st century at its regional and international conferences. In 2017, OESIS

brought its professional development content online with OESIS-XP, so member schools

can expose their faculty to innovation across the country without traveling. Through this

faculty-focused network, independent school teachers and administrators collaborate

on changing learning models with an emphasis on the innovative practices in pedagogy,

curriculum development, and school culture change.

Table 13. In five years in your estimation, to what degree will the following movements in programming have taken hold at your school?

	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	A lot	Not familiar
Inter-disciplinary approaches					
Count	0				
Row %	0.0%				
PBL or PRBL					
Count	3	25			
Row %	2.1%	17.5%			
Mastery/Competency-based					
Count	7	46	52		
Row %	4.9%	32.2%	36.4%		
Online and Blended Learning					
Count	12	53	50		
Row %	8.4%	37.1%	35.0%		
STEM or STEAM					
Count	1	21	51	69	
Row %	0.7%	14.7%	35.7%	48.3%	
Maker-based					
Count	4	40	51	42	6
Row %	2.8%	28.0%	35.7%	29.4%	4.2%
Experiential					
Count	3	26	46	66	2
Row %	2.1%	18.2%	32.2%	46.2%	1.4%

(the desires on the part of schools to give greater emphasis to student needs and passions)

3.3 Current Composition and Focus

Table 14 below gives a picture of program as it is today in independent schools, and it is no surprise that it is heavily content-based: even less so when you look at a slice of elementary schools where basic skills are naturally pervasive. Around 80% of schools in the elementary grades are skills driven "a lot or a fair amount." About a third of respondent schools overall seem to have some form of PBL and inter-disciplinary program as significant elements have taken hold either "a lot or a fair amount."   Many of these program changes are project-oriented or only partially inter-disciplinary.

Table 14. Please gauge the composition of your program at your school according to the following elements.

	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	A lot	Responses
Content Standards-Based					
Count	14				
Row %	9.9%				
Competency-Based					
Count	17	7			
Row %	12.0%	50.?			
Skills-Based					
Count	2	45	6		
Row %	1.4%	31.7%	46.5		
Project-Based					
Count	10	75	49		
Row %	7.0%	52.8%	34.5%		
Interdisciplinary					
Count	8	87	36	11	
Row %	5.6%	61.3%	25.4%	7.7%	
Maker-Based					
Count	39	81	20	2	142
Row %	27.5%	57.0%	14.1%	1.4%	

With respect to overall change in programmatic elements, we are beginning to see many more schools looking at their schedule, with particular focus on longer periods for more student-centered work and collaboration, with common blocks for inter-disciplinary collaboration or co-curricular initiatives, more emphasis on advisory programming, and even semester/trimester adjustments for passion-based or community-centric engagements of up to 3 weeks in duration.

In terms of course of study changes, more student-driven co-curricular offerings have entered the Program, there has been a continued move away from APs to Honors equivalent courses, and even the entrance of PBL and Blending into AP courses, something we have seen in our conferences.

Table 15. To what degree have the following elements of your academic program been modified in the past 10 years?

	Limited	Incremental	Significant	Substantial	Overhaul	Responses
Course of Study Count Row %	14 9.9%	36.6%				
Pedagogy Count Row %	15 10.6%	44 31.0%	44 31.0%			
Schedule Count Row %	23 16.2%	35 24.6%	35 24.6%	24 16.9%	17.6%	
Transcript Count Row %	81 57.0%	37 26.1%	13 9.2%	9 6.3%	2 1.4%	142

Blended and online learning has seen good growth over the last few years, and predictably, it has been most prevalent in the area of electives: 45% of schools plan to offer more electives as online courses. It has also started to have some effect in creating greater flexibility within the schedule for student pacing in the regular core sequences of classes: 52% plan to blend their classes with more online elements. Blending offers a convergent path to mastery and competency. We are not seeing much growth, if any, in the consortia memberships servicing the independent school community. Some of this is by design with closed communities of affinity schools, but it does not look like any of them will scale to be substantial players in the sector unless they expand their range of services. In many ways, therefore, this represents the low-hanging fruit for schools in terms of offering solutions that have some impact on the margins, but no transformative effect on the whole.

Table 16: Please share your attitude towards online learning and blended courses below:

	Yes	No	Not applicable	Responses
Happy with overall participation level of only doing online with consortia we belong to	46			
Count	32.4			
Row %				
Plan to blend our classes with more online elements				
Count	75	52		
Row %	52.8%	36.6		
Plan to offer more electives as online courses in the future				
Count	64	65	1	
Row %	45.1%	45.8%	9.2	
Plan to offer more core classes with less than sufficient demand as online courses in the future				
Count	47	74	21	
Row %	33.1%	52.1%	14.8%	
Plan to offer online courses to other schools outside of consortia as a way of generating income				
Count	22	98	22	142
Row %	15.5%	69.0%	15.5%	
Do not believe in online learning as an independent school approach				
Count	15	101	26	142
Row %	10.6%	71.1%	18.3%	

3.4 Internal Barriers and Strategies for Change

With PBL and inter-disciplinary education very much the direction independent schools aspire to, what is getting in the way? Before examining some of the reasons suggested in the tables below, let's look at some of the more difficult to survey causes.

The first in our minds is that schools lack an agreed upon framework under which to build such courses. Schools think they can just develop inter-disciplinary courses like they have developed traditional courses. Schools therefore often approach this process from a content or thematic view point as their starting position: "let's look at the literature of the period and let's place that next to the major cultural and political happenings of the time to make connections and contexts" or "we can look at the biology and chemistry around these environmental issues to do a project on sustainability." There is nothing wrong with this, except in the calibration between the student-centered end of the "volume control" and teacher-centered on the other end; these approaches are firmly towards the latter. And this might be deliberate, because the school might feel such interdisciplinary programs afford the ability to embed foundational content and discipline-specific skills. Competency-based education, however, can both provide foundational meta-skills (girded by performance indicators) and foundational content to enable greater student agency. As David Weinberger and many others have written, knowledge is now very much part of networks. Students need to be given the agency to access and collaborate their way.   The same applies for teachers, our thinking behind the OESIS network. We discuss this in the next section, with the competencies providing a larger competency framework or umbrella above the foundational content and discipline-specific skills to build more open-ended student-driven projects.

Secondly, schools are associating project-based learning with end-of-course type capstone projects. Many of these are more project-oriented because they focus on the product rather than the process of PBL; they are individual-driven, content-specific, time-limited, and assessed with limited visibility other than the creation. PBL experts call these "dessert projects" because they are afterthoughts to the main sequence of content or learning or even "dumpster projects," as they have no enduring evidence of learning and justify limited exhibition, if any. The PBL Cohorts that OESIS runs with experts from High Tech High and independent school inter-disciplinary leaders focus on the whole process. That includes doing projects in advance, building exemplars so students can see what the teacher has done as a starting point, looking at how to build in iterative processes and manage student collaboration, managing the calendar, building rubrics of performance tasks, and more.

The third is a human resources and teacher disposition issue. PBL is centered around students taking risks. Teachers too are taking risks because they are in very different contexts of control and motivation. They need more time to prepare. They need more time in the schedule. They need to have the support when they appear to fail in the minds of parents and students. These along with the barriers advanced in Table 17 are real. We examine these areas in more detail in Human Resources. The strategies starting to be put into place in Table 18 in terms of teacher and departmental direction will then start to pay off.

Table 17: What barriers, if any, do you see to implementing PBL-based approaches at your school?

	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	A lot	Not applicable	Responses
It requires significant curriculum development burdens on our teachers. Count Row %	5 3.5%	1...				
We may need to go deeper and narrower in our curriculum to fit in such approaches Count Row %	9 6.3%	32 22.5%	60 42.3%			
We have no experience assessing skills in PBL environments Count Row %	17 12.0%	54 38.0%	29 20.4%	34 23.9%	8 5.6%	
We lack a sufficient PD budget Count Row %	62 43.7%	35 24.6%	18 12.7%	19 13.4%	8 5.6%	142

Table 18. How do you see the process of interdisciplinary curriculum development taking place at your school?

	Yes	No	A little	Not applicable	Responses
We have staff tasked with promoting interdisciplinary curriculum development Count Row %	67 47.2%				
Department Chairs are required to go in this direction Count Row %	35 24.6%	41 28.9%	4 30.3		
Teacher goals reflect this desire Count Row %	56 39.4%	16 11.3%	66 46.5%	4 2.8%	
We plan to collaborate with other schools or curriculum providers Count Row %	29 20.4%	54 38.0%	46 32.4%	13 9.2%	142

3.5 Programmatic Summary

We think that, in summary, the overall programmatic indicators above are showing a real awakening of the need to change; a realization that we need to re-examine what is the purpose of school for students so that they embrace the experience and enjoy it. A good analytical tool in this regard is the famous Harvard Milkshake case study by Professor Clayton Christensen, one of the co-authors of *Disrupting Class.* A fast-food chain in this study engaged a team to study how to increase milkshake sales and discovered to their surprise that better marketing, pricing, coloring or flavoring did not work. Looking deeper, they finally realized that consumers were buying a milkshake mostly in the early morning. Why? Because the milkshake was not just a tasty treat, but it was serving a purpose; it had a "job" for the buyer. The "job" that emerged was it made the commute more enjoyable because it lasted longer than a quick breakfast item. So what did they recommend the fast food chain to do? Make that job even more engaging by putting more fruit chunks, making it thicker and more enjoyable. Sales went up. What is the job your school is doing for your students…as a private school? Ask your recent graduates.

The significant news in the tables below is that from 17% now, within 3 years, 31% of independent schools will have defined a set of competencies and attributed them to each course, and within 5 years that number will be 48%. This calculation is computed by first looking at Table 7 that asks who has defined competencies, and then using Table 8, taking those still in the process (the blue bar in Table 7) and asking their

timeline for completion. With only 17% having already defined a set of competencies, the survey indicates this will be a significant trend.

Table 7: Has your school defined a set of competencies for student achievement infused and identifiable throughout your curriculum? For example, competencies might include larger grain size goals such as critical thinking, collaboration or global-mindedness.
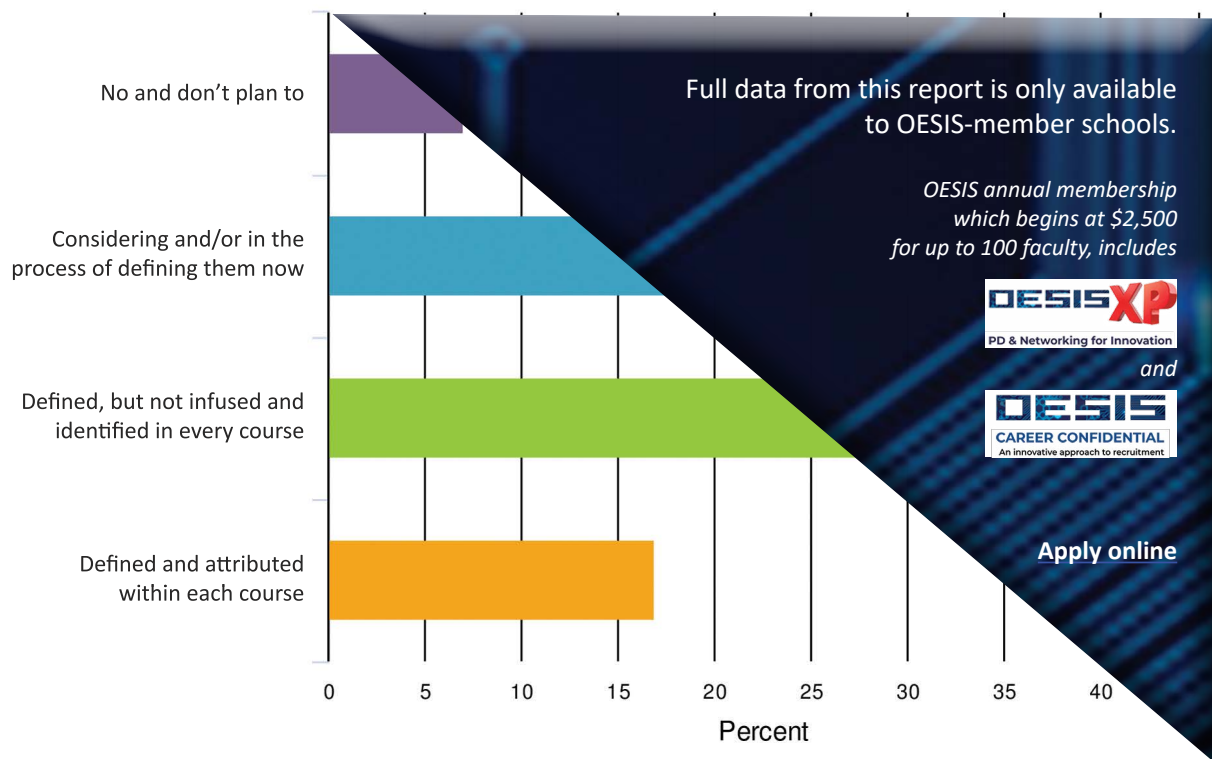
Table 8. When do you think this might be completed?
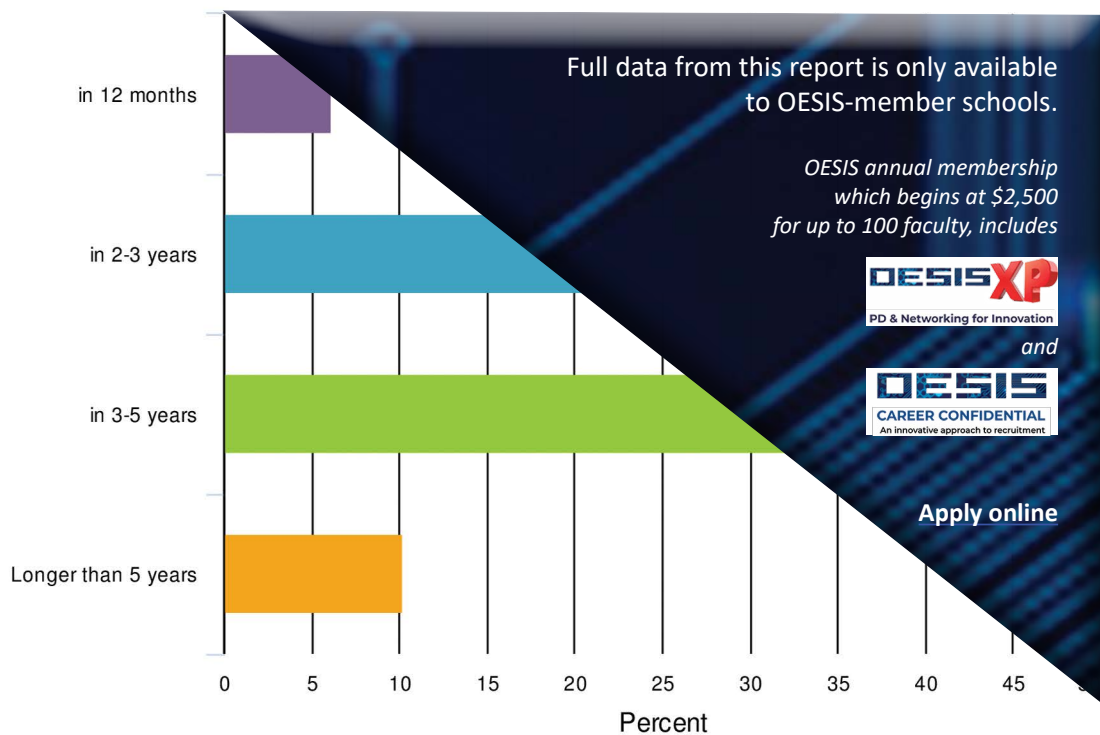
Independent schools face a number of challenges, which we examine in detail below as they move towards student-centered assessment approaches like competency-based assessment.

But first, a few words on the misconceptions that have surrounded the assessment of skills, habits and competencies (together referred to as CBE: Competency-Based Education), the major change we are seeing at schools. First, CBE does not seek to eliminate content; in fact, much of it is built around taxonomies like Bloom's Hierarchy that emphasize foundational content. Nor does CBE require schools to eliminate grades and GPA's, and this can be seen in many of the New England schools that are part of the Great Schools Partnership. Their transcripts accommodate the needs of external constituencies, while others adopt approaches like tracking an equivalent GPA but do not disclose it to students until a later time in the school experience. The misconceptions of schools surrounding CBE often prevent them from moving forward.

4.1 Defining a Common Language

We need to define a common language for assessment, as already the connotations of some terms are leading schools away from this approach for no good reason. Some schools object to the word "mastery" as being too rich a designation, and one that could discourage a growth mindset that underlies excellence. We would like to define what we mean and use the following graphic in a rubric to illustrate it. First of all, a competency is different than a standard: a standard could be either skills or content, whilst a competency is a higher "grain size" skill, and unlike a standard, it has no specific correlation with age.

A competency, then, is a set of skills or habits tied to a set of supporting skills (meta-skills) and supporting content that can be practiced in a discipline-specific context or transferred into an inter-disciplinary context that has no standard trajectory or sequence, but can be tracked. Those skills or habits enable greater self-assessment and/or meta-cognition, can be cultured formatively (but also summatively), and are assessed by performance tasks (performance indicators).

GREAT SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP

Scoring Criteria
Communication

Performance Indicator	1	2	3	4
A. Demonstrate organized communication through varied modes (oral, written, visual and/or performance).	I can • repeat information that has been presented to me when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).	I can • organize information to communicate my ideas and responses when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).	I can • present information and ideas coherently, with logical sequence when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).	I can • enhance my communication through the sequence and presentation of ideas when using any mode of communication (oral, written, visual, and/or performance).
B. Use evidence and logic purposefully in communication.	I can • identify evidence that could relate to my purpose; • share ideas that relate to my purpose.	I can • select evidence that connects to my purpose; • organize and present ideas based on my purpose.	I can • incorporate evidence that enhances purposeful communication; • Use sound reasoning to explain my ideas and achieve my purpose.	I can • incorporate the most relevant and effective evidence to justify my purpose; • Use sound reasoning to explain ideas and address counterarguments to achieve my purpose.

As with competencies, only around 17% of our schools are at the stage of defining meta-skills (Table 19 below), but the good news again is that they see it as a priority and within three years it is projected to reach about 30% (Table 20).

Table 19. Has your school defined and implemented a set of meta-skills for student achievement that are tied to competencies? For example, under a competency such as critical thinking a meta-skill might be "Asks follow-up questions to broaden his/her inquiry."

Value	
Yes	
No	
In the Works	
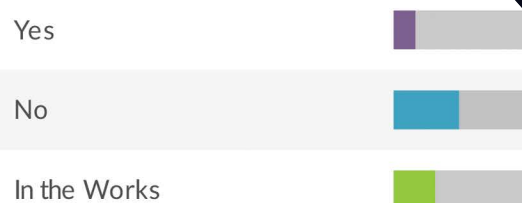
Full data from this report is only available to OESIS-member schools.

OESIS annual membership which begins at $2,500 for up to 100 faculty, includes

OESISXP
PD & Networking for Innovation

and

OESIS
CAREER CONFIDENTIAL
An innovative approach to recruitment

Apply online

Table 20. When do you think defining a set of meta-skills tied to competencies will be completed?

Value		Percent
in 12 months		40.0%
in 2-3 years		40.0%
in 3-5 years		17.8%
Longer than 5 years		2.2%

Totals: 45

4.2 Defining what schools value from the past and for the future

Assessing what schools value at a top level by way of competencies is not easy because it forces schools to think outside the siloes they have created, to dissect the institutional statements of mission and purpose, and engage in a deeper cross-sectional look into the Program. It is further complicated by the fact that if they consider they are preparing students for life, then the requirements of this 21st century may be very different.

For example, teamwork may be the closest thing to collaboration, and it might have shown up in sports or in discrete areas of the academic program, such as the Performing Arts, but may be very different in a highly connected world. Communication may have been the responsibility of the English department in the sphere of creative writing or of the History department in the creation of an argument, but may be very different in an inter-disciplinary project context. And what does communication or character look like in a Math or Science class?

4.3 The Ideal Number of Competencies

Many are grappling now with how many of those overall competencies they can realistically manage: some leading organizations in the CBE movement like the Great Schools Partnership advocate no more than five, for no other reason than it may be too much of a cognitive load for students to manage. Should there be school-wide competencies or should they be division-specific, and are there different cognitive loads for different age levels?

4.4 Discipline-specific Content and Discipline-specific Skills Mapping

There are frameworks of skill and content standards in many disciplines (NGSS, C3, ACTFL), and since standards are generally built for the public school system, they are often age related (Common Core). The standards provide great opportunity for schools to take the focus away from grades, and as a result there has been an explosion of standards-based grading in schools, both private and public. These cover all subjects and we are seeing standards-based grading in the Humanities like Languages and English as much as in the Sciences and Math.

This route is great in that it provides a springboard for teachers to see how to move to the next level of tying those discipline-specific skills to the higher level competencies. It also affords an opportunity for them to consider how they can create time for enabling more inter-disciplinary PBL. Here is where there is much overlap with the data-driven environments pioneered in public schools. As schools get a good picture of their curriculum map in each discipline by skill and content, data solutions can advise teachers how to intervene more dynamically and formatively and in team-based environments. We have seen this in sophisticated forms like the approach of Northfield Mount Hermon (MA) putting all their Freshman in a large Algebra classroom served by three teachers: skill and content standards analysis daily provides cluster data on which kids may be put together for small-group direct instruction or further help. Many such examples exist in Flex-type public schools, leveraging advanced blended learning techniques and data.

4.5 Calibrating the Disciplinary vs Inter-Disciplinary Mix

OESIS sees schools continuing with existing structures like departments, but over time their portfolio of courses will increasingly turn inter-disciplinary. The framework below from the Great Schools Partnership also considers that there will be a mix of disciplinary and inter-disciplinary competencies (see Red Arrow below) that constitute a transcript. This point is important because the messaging with mastery has, in some contexts, communicated an alternate reality of schools with little content and perhaps no academic departments.

Framework for Proficiency-Based Learning Graphic

Graduation Requirement	Communication of Progress		Assessment Practices
YES	Transcripts, Report Cards, Grades	**Graduation Competencies** — 3–6 cross-curricular 3–6 in each content area — Essential, enduring, and transferable skills and knowledge.	Students demonstrate proficiency in each graduation competency. Verification of proficiency happens over time through multiple and varied methods.
NO	Formative and Summative Feedback	**Performance Indicators** — 5–8 per competency — Measurable skills and knowledge that comprise a graduation competency.	Students advance their learning on performance indicators through formative assessments and create evidence of proficiency through summative assessments.
NO	Formative Feedback	**Learning Targets** — The discrete elements of each performance indicator that guide daily learning.	Students build their knowledge and skills through practice on learning targets and feedback from formative assessments.

There are many influences on how the mix evolves, but a central focus will be the level of student buy-in to the new competency-based responsibility they have for their own learning, the comfort level of each department with the minimum foundational levels of content they require for their students, and the professional learning of their teachers in PBL skills.

4.6 Moving towards the Formative

The currency of education in this century is self-reflection or meta-cognition, and formative feedback bubbles up to the top of assessment strategies in this regard. Part of the slow shift is the need for grades to define performance in a content-based course. As we migrate to PBL and inter-disciplinary courses within a CBE framework, the emphasis on formative has to increase. Table 21 below shows, however, that independent schools are very early in the process of formative intervention (more on that below), with only 3% having large banks of formative assessment in place. Table 22 below paints a further tableau of the heavily summative context of our schools.

Table 21. Do your teachers plan to build large banks of formative assessments, such as those required for more flexible intervention environments like mastery/competency/blending?

Value	
Yes	
No	
Maybe	
Dont Know	
Already in place	

Full data from this report is only available to OESIS-member schools.

OESIS annual membership which begins at $2,500 for up to 100 faculty, includes

OESISXP
PD & Networking for Innovation

and

OESIS
CAREER CONFIDENTIAL
An innovative approach to recruitment

Apply online
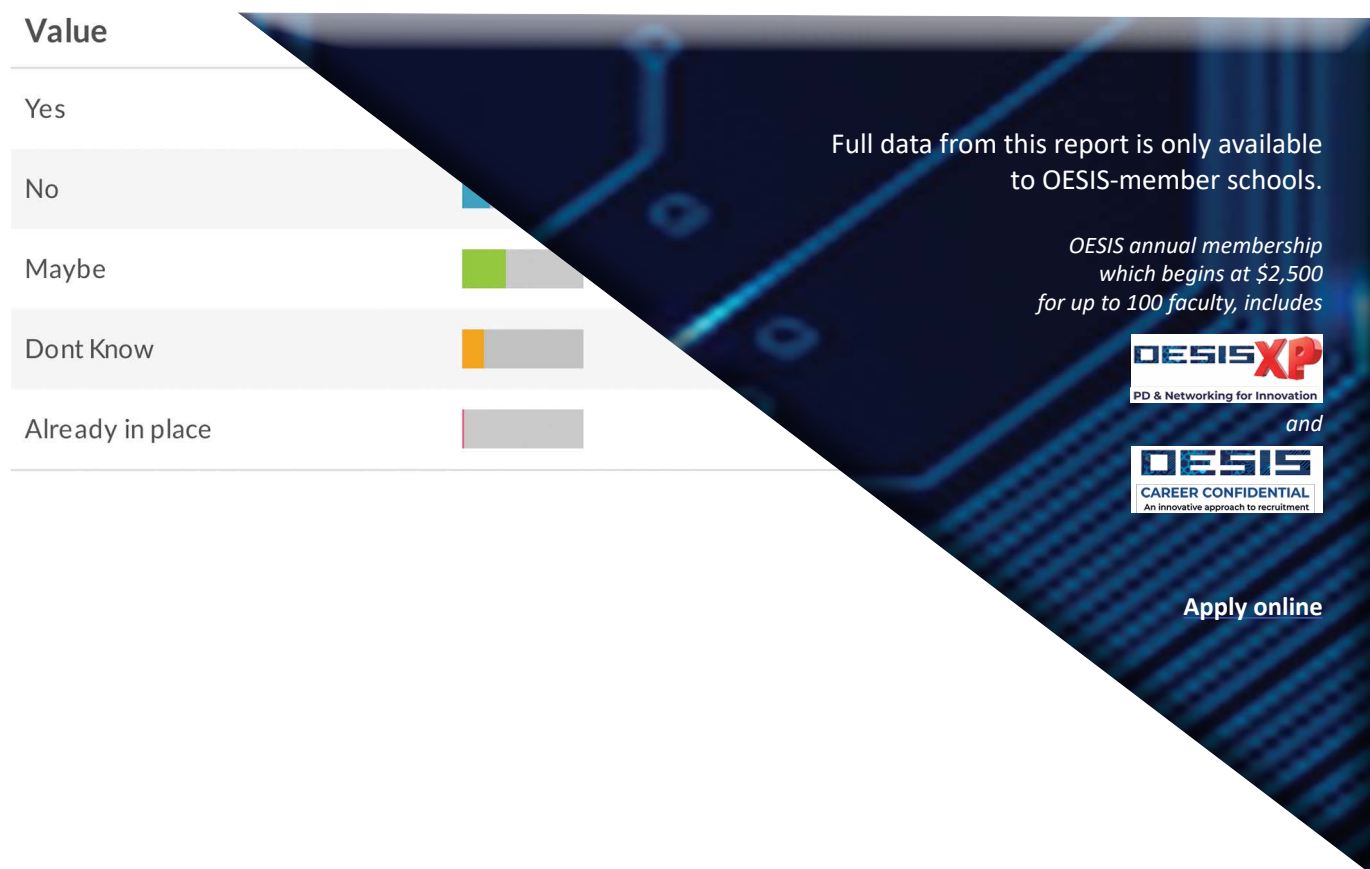
Table 22. Which of the following assessment methods are used by your teachers?

Summative Assessment					
Count					
Row %	1.4%				
Formative Assessment					
Count	2	31			
Row %	1.4%	21.8%			
Standards-Based Grading					
Count	27	73	33		
Row %	19.0%	51.4%	23.2%		
Proficiency Rubrics by Skill					
Count	11	51	57	23	
Row %	7.7%	35.9%	40.1%	16.2%	
Peer Review					
Count	27	82	26	7	142
Row %	19.0%	57.7%	18.3%	4.9%	

4.7 Benchmarking for Competency Validation

We consider benchmarking important on an anonymous aggregated basis for schools, not as an accountability tool for individual teachers. Already, a suspicion exists that CBE will "dumb down" the curriculum and lower expectations, and that it will be subject to significant inflation in credits. These concerns are real, but there are other concerns that drive us to consider benchmarking.

Firstly, the credits should be tied to the kind of tasks that students are doing to demonstrate competency, and it would serve us well to consider task models that are related to competency ("these meta-skills are showing real efficacy in project-based, discussion-based, collaborative or direct-instruction environments").

Secondly, if we are to believe in equity, then we should be isolating the performance of sub-groups and not assuming homogeneity based on our admissions pool. Table 10 reflects our concern, and Table 23 shows that the data discussion remains without a clear consensus.

Table 10. How will you ensure assessment of proficiency levels will have a correlation between your teachers or peer schools and not lead to the same grade inflation we have seen in schools over the last 20 years in letter grades?

Full data from this report is only available to OESIS-member schools.

OESIS annual membership which begins at $2,500 for up to 100 faculty, includes

OESISXP
PD & Networking for Innovation

and

OESIS
CAREER CONFIDENTIAL
An innovative approach to recruitment

Apply online

Table 23. Formative assessment, standards-based grading and proficiency rubrics entail greater use of student progression data. Please identify the context of your school's approach to data usage.

	Yes	No	Responses
Let the teachers determine how to mine it Count Row %			
Provide tools and training to maximize student progression data usage by our teachers Count Row %			
Exploring school wide options Count Row %	78 61.4%	4? 38.6%	
Not a priority as small class size takes care of it Count Row %	56 44.1%	71 55.9%	12?

4.8 Assessing teachers' abilities to adapt

Schools have historically used content expertise as a screening criterion in their hiring (MA required minimum), but now schools will be forced to evaluate whether their teachers have the competencies they want for their students. See Table 29 in the Human Resources section for the 21st century pedagogical challenges schools identify for their faculty.

4.9 Summary

We have developed a 10-year map of the processes involved in going down this path, based on survey data and our knowledge of schools that are very much in the vanguard. Schools will need to navigate the significant concerns expressed in Table 24 below of the barriers that need to be overcome. We believe that the process before real change starts to materialize is around 5 years in duration. We think significant milestones will be reached in the 5-7 year period as decisions on the content/skills mix, the inter-disciplinary/disciplinary mix, the schedule and the transcript can be made. Transformation will be a 10-year process.

Table 24. What barriers, if any, do you see to implementing mastery and competency-based approaches at your school?

	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	A lot	Not applicable	Responses
It requires teachers to change the way they motivate, pace, assess and intervene. Count Row %	3 2.1%					
We are afraid parents will not understand its benefits Count Row %	11 7.7%	43 30.3%	32			
Colleges and schools which we feed into will take time to accept its validity Count Row %	11 7.7%	37 26.1%	32 22.5%			
We need to understand the implications for our schedule and course of study Count Row %	13 9.2%	40 28.2%	48 33.8%	33 23.2%	8 5.6%	
We are afraid that it will be seen as dumbing down the Program Count Row %	36 25.4%	37 26.1%	38 26.8%	21 14.8%	10 7.0%	
We fear that there will be an equal risk of mastery inflation as grade inflation in traditional contexts because skills are more difficult to assess. Count Row %	13 9.2%	49 34.5%	45 31.7%	27 19.0%	8 5.6%	142

Although by this time it is obvious (because the results do not differ in all three of our research surveys (see Table 25 below) that faculty culture remains the main barrier to change, some schools have been successful effecting change. They have invested deeply in every conversation that is afforded in a time constrained year to develop new ways of thinking about the student journey in the 21st century. Those conversations take place at every level in strategic plans, in departmental statements of purpose, in classroom artifacts, in portraits of graduates, in shared rubrics, in defined competencies and meta-skills, in advisory programs, and even in redefining mission statements. They have evaluated the silos where entrenched resistance pervade, and the resistance-thinking driving ingrained practices from teachers to college counselors. They have invested in structures of teams for exploration, research and development. They have invested in aligned teacher evaluation and professional development programs. They have secured budgets commensurate with the magnitude of the tasks ahead. They have communicated honestly and openly with the many constituencies involved. They have modeled failure and tried to get educators to take risks with the knowledge of full support. They have looked for peer schools with an affinity to collaborate. The list goes on.

Table 25. Prioritize and rank in order up to four factors that need most attention in enabling programmatic change at your school.

Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Establishing faculty culture and consensus on the need for student centered approaches				
Risking a change of curriculum away from external pressures such as AP and College entry paradigms	2			
Breaking down departmental silos	3			
Increasing Professional Development Funds and Time	4			
Re-configuring Learning Spaces and Classrooms	5			
Increasing Recruitment of 21st century faculty	6			
Wholesale change in the schedule	7			
Building middle management leadership	8		67	
Formulating a technology strategy and resource base	9		63	
Parent, Board and Alumni education	10		63	

Lowest Rank — Highest Rank

A storyline needs to be developed for faculty that on the one hand emphasizes the kind of transformative approaches we have written about as an institutional imperative (reinforced by groundwork laid in strategic plans, budgets and more), but also seeks to allay the main fears teachers have. And perhaps that involves admitting to a limited culture of curricular renewal, as Table 26 below profiles for the sector as a whole:

Table 26. Is there a culture of programmatic renewal at your school?

Value	
Not at all	
A little	
A fair amount	
A lot	16.9%

Full data from this report is only available to OESIS-member schools.

OESIS annual membership which begins at $2,500 for up to 100 faculty, includes

OESISXP
PD & Networking for Innovation

and

OESIS
CAREER CONFIDENTIAL
An innovative approach to recruitment

Apply online
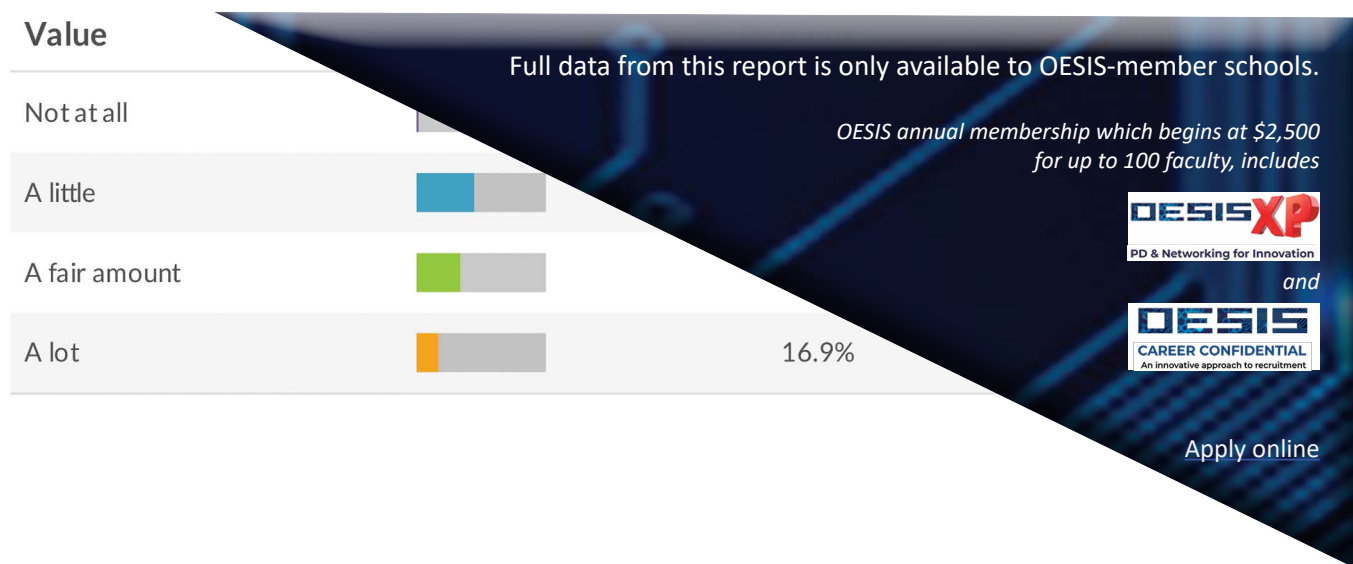
**Full data from the Learning Innovation Report
is only available to OESIS-member schools**

OESIS annual membership,
which begins at $2,500 for up to 100 faculty, includes:

♦ OESIS-XP Professional Development & Networking
♦ Career Confidential Recruiting & Talent Management
♦ OESIS conference discounts
♦ priority placement in faculty cohorts on PBL, Mastery and Global Leadership

Progressive independent schools may apply online at http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/3978348/OESIS-XP-Subscription.

Many of the fears that drive a lack of curricular renewal center around the disappearance of content, the disappearance of grades and departments, the lack of time they have and thereby the increased unsupportable burdens of PD and curriculum development, and the "new initiative fatigue" that they are now used to, but decry. Table 27 provides a picture of some of the concerns around CBE, but they also apply to innovation or change at large:

Table 27. What barriers do you see in tying these competencies to every course?

	Not at	A	A fair		
Insufficient Priority at t... Count Row %					
Insufficient Teacher PD Time Count Row %	11 10.2%				
Teachers Fear Curriculum and Content will suffer Count Row %	8 7.4%	33 30.6%	45 41.7%		
Seen as Window-Dressing Count Row %	32 29.6%	40 37.0%	26 24.1%	10 9.3%	1...

The process of change will require a level of teacher collaboration that they will be uncomfortable with. Although they are used to some intra-departmental collaboration, they are certainly not used to collaboration across departments (in less than 10% of schools do they develop curriculum together or teach a class together "a lot" according to Table 28). Collaboration between peer schools is at even a lower ebb, something we are trying to redress through our network and our platforms like OESIS-XP and our faculty cohorts.

Table 28. To what degree do your teachers collaborate across departments?

Full data from this report is only available to OESIS-member schools.

OESIS annual membership which begins at $2,500 for up to 100 faculty, includes

Developing curriculum			
Count	15		
Row %	10.6%		
Team teaching an inter-disciplinary class			
Count	34	74	21
Row %	23.9%	52.1%	14.8%

and

Apply online

What will be the long-term evolutions here? In the future, the role of the teacher could be less consolidated, meaning schools should prepare for more specialization: content experts, data experts, curriculum developers, project managers, inter-disciplinary collaborators, social emotional experts, R&D managers, experiential analysts creators, and more. Schools will be looking for teachers who are prepared to take risks in their pedagogy and encourage such mindsets in their students. They will be looking at communicators, who can build relationships outside of their content comfort zones. They will be looking for collaborators who have reached outside of their immediate circles of colleagues with the facility of their students. They will be looking for adaptable individuals who see the classroom as at times an intellectual construct, sometimes with walls, at other times as part of the community, at others inside a computer or on a playing field. And the same is true for mid- and senior-level management.

Schools will be investing in these individuals to a degree not seen before and they will place huge importance on their retention and growth. Recruitment, with its heavy cost burdens, might be a luxury. Table 29 gives a sense of the pedagogical challenges that 21st century environments place for teachers; managing uneven student pacing and formative assessment environments stand out in particular, and will require significant PD in the years ahead as schools change.

Table 29. How challenging are any of the following 21st century pedagogical skills for your teachers?

	Not at all	A little	Fairly	Very	Responses
Moving from teaching to the middle to personalizing instruction					
Count	4				
Row %	2.8%				
Managing student pacing that is not uniform					
Count	4	22			
Row %	2.8%	15.5%	4		
Using data differently to formulate new formative assessment environments					
Count	3	25	64		
Row %	2.1%	17.6%	45.1%	35.2	
Not making content as the foundation for all pedagogy					
Count	7	24	57	54	142
Row %	4.9%	16.9%	40.1%	38.0%	
Handling instruction online and blended instruction					
Count	13	39	50	40	142
Row %	9.2%	27.5%	35.2%	28.2%	

Equally, the picture on professional development is not an encouraging one at this stage, with none of the major categories considered excellent by even a quarter of the schools surveyed, and often considerably less. Professional development for schools going down this route will become a source of intellectual property and must be seen as an asset class. There has been a significant increase more recently in the emphasis on PD as we have noticed across the country.

Table 30. Please rate the following avenues of professional development in their effectiveness of enabling a more student-centered learning environment.

	N/A	Poor	OK	Good	Excellent	Responses
Division or school-wide programming						
Count	3					
Row %	2.1%					
Departmental or Grade level Meetings						
Count	1	8				
Row %	0.7%	5.6%				
National Conferences						
Count	5	29	68			
Row %	3.5%	20.4%	47.9%			
Regional Association Conferences						
Count	6	27	61	41		
Row %	4.2%	19.0%	43.0%	28.9%		
Social Networking like Twitter						
Count	21	44	54	16	7	
Row %	14.8%	31.0%	38.0%	11.3%	4.9%	
Online Courses						
Count	14	32	66	24	6	
Row %	9.9%	22.5%	46.5%	16.9%	4.2%	
Speakers						
Count	4	16	72	41	9	142
Row %	2.8%	11.3%	50.7%	28.9%	6.3%	
Consultants						
Count	14	22	52	42	12	142
Row %	9.9%	15.5%	36.6%	29.6%	8.5%	

The use of academic technology in the classroom seems to be showing significant progress from the results in Table 31 in terms of acceptance and use. In particular, there is a growing recognition that technology tools, when used in the appropriate context, are impacting outcomes and therefore justifying the cost. Table 32 shows room for significant improvement in the case of maker spaces, principally for the reasons outlined above: the lack of an earlier competency framework for greater integration of regular teachers.

Yet there are gaps, with the biggest being a tool that is separate from an LMS, a personal website, or a Google Doc for a student to really manage the assets, or artifacts of learning, they create during the journey called school. Imagine a tool that is their own and conforms with the push towards student agency, but recognizes the burdens and opportunities they have for collaboration. A few schools in the vanguard of innovation, competency and PBL are looking for a solution that resembles a digital portfolio, a tool that can be used to collaborate around all digital media forms, assets, credentials, etc. with peers, teachers, colleges and for interviews. Imagine a tool that can be secure or open, that can be a conduit to self-reflection. A tool that dovetails with the student journey but is not stifled by the tight integration of workflow that takes it too much into the teacher-centered domain. The use of such a tool will be another indicator of progress towards real 21st century change. Our schools are working with us to explore the dimensions of such a tool, called OESIS Portfolio.

Join the OESIS Family of Leading Independent Schools
Below are some schools participating in 2018

Portfolios: Begin Where Your Students Are

By **Joel Backon,** *Director of Academic Technology,* Choate Rosemary Hall (CT)

As an educator, while I generally prefer tackling large and complex challenges such as complete solutions to support student learning, I often find myself compartmentalizing each step of that process making it difficult to see the forest through the trees. In addition, over the past few years, I have joined the ranks of the converts from teacher- to student-directed learning, but still face the same challenge as in the past: how do I know that a student has actually learned something? The transition to PBL (project-based learning) was designed to aid in that process by asking students to apply knowledge to the solving of problems through individual and collaborative project work over long periods of time. I've also taken grades off the table to the extent that my school permits, and rely on written and verbal feedback for assessments. I don't yet, however, have a set of competency-based criteria to help me and my students measure their progress. I still have to rely on traditional grade rubrics to create the criteria that students strive to achieve. At the tail end of the process, I do have a portfolio for each student that is embedded with a workflow management tool called Seesaw. The importance of Seesaw is that it is driven primarily by students, not by me, and that is how it differs from an LMS such as Canvas, Haiku, or Blackboard. While my goal is to have the entire package, a PBL pedagogy supported by competency-based criteria yielding a portfolio that both verifies and communicates competency, I'm not quite there yet.

For those who use an LMS, the potential exists to combine many of the pieces in my dream learning environment, but it will still be designed from the vantage point of the teacher. Changing that mindset to one that is more student-directed is a tall order because it generally requires a change in school culture. But there are ways to ease into a student-directed mindset without immediate disruption. Whether you are using competency-based assessments or PBL in your school, the last piece in the process, an effective portfolio, will still fit well with your preferred pedagogy and method of assessment. First, it is a good way of shifting more responsibility to your students without making wholesale changes to educational practice. They (and their families) own the portfolio and decide what is included. They can categorize the work in a way that matches how work is organized at your school or they can develop their own scheme. Students can add any kind of work they produce, including video of understanding that cannot be captured in another way. They can share any artifact of learning with a teacher writing a recommendation, a school to which they are applying, friends, or others who might be interested in evidence of skills mastery or content knowledge. It is a wonderful first step for increasing student responsibility. My experience has been that students are more self-reflective regarding their work and take more pride in the work product because it has meaning and is potentially more public.

I know that OESIS is currently testing such a portfolio tool in a handful of schools with a goal of making it available early next year. I encourage you to think about it and take the first step in the mindset shift that helps students to be more effective learners.

Table 31. Please assess the degree of impact of technology in your program:

	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	A lot	Responses
Academic Techno... Count Row %					
Academic Technology has teacher buy-in for effecting outcomes Count Row %	7 4.9%				
Academic Technology has been worth the expense Count Row %	4 2.8%	23 16.2%	65 45.8%	35.2%	

Table 32. Are your innovation facilities such as your labs, maker spaces and creation centers programmatically separate from other classes or are they used by teachers in the other classes and departments?

Value
Programmatically separate
Used by Regular Subject Teachers a Little
Used by Regular Subject Teachers a Fair Amount
Used by Regular Subject Teachers a Lot because we offer many integrated classes.

T

If you have read beyond the 10,000 or so words above, we must congratulate you, but we also have a sense of what you are probably thinking. Now what?

We have always maintained that the process of change will need to start at the center of the school and fan outward. With CBE and PBL this could not be clearer as the department chairs, deans of faculty and other academic mid-management will be empowered as the engines of progress. Sun Tsu in the *Art of War* said it best, "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

We firmly believe that you can inspire these educators to begin this journey, because what characterizes them most as educators is not just their capacity to instruct, but their dedication to the needs of their students. And those student needs are very different. Schools looking to change the culture to a more student-centered world will need to help educators understand how the context of education has changed. Start with testing whether they understand what that means, what an experience really looks like in the wider world not just in the workplace but in every facet of life. Give them opportunities to be tested the way their students will be, on their process, their ability to collaborate, to assess and take risks, and show initiative. We can help you do that.

Those department chairs and academic administrators will initially be presiding over a process that requires them to dissect their curriculum, identify opportunities for the kind of student progress they want, and embed further opportunities within their current skill and content strictures. Over time, they will preside over an evolution to more inter-disciplinary and student-centered pedagogical contexts, while still safeguarding elements of content, skills, themes and narratives they consider foundational. They will be assessing student buy-in and determining strategies for adjustment, all of which will lead to a culture of curricular renewal.

We have done full-day sessions in this vein with entire faculties and other groups at schools, and we have also provided a roadmap. Set out on the next page is a chart with what that roadmap looks like in broad categories of tasks with ranges of time for how long this could take and milestones. There is no perfect science behind such roadmaps, and this one represents our distillation of what lies ahead based on what we are seeing at leading schools and what this data set has told us.

If you are looking for resources, look at the organizations mentioned in this report and look on our website. As a member school you will find much more in our extensive innovation XP video library, our folders on competency and PBL, and our department-by-department resources. Most importantly, encourage your faculty to collaborate with educators all across the country on our XP departmental discussion channels, our listservs, in our faculty cohorts, and at our conferences. Your work is important. We hope this helps.

ROAD MAP AHEAD

Years

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Laying the Groundwork

Defining Competencies

Reconfiguring Admissions, Marketing & Advancement Strategies

Attributing Meta-Skills & Content

Configuring the Assessment Model

Assessing Validity

Assessing Student Buy-in

Strategizing Pedagogical Approach

Refining the Schedule

Calibrating Teacher Driven/Student Driven Mix

Designing Infrastructure, Transcripts & Systems

Talent Management Strategy

Tracking Yardsticks of Curricular Renewal

CBE Implementation Areas