



**Pittsfield Public Schools
Pittsfield, New Hampshire
District-Level Systems Change Initiative
Phase Two Year Three**

**Nellie Mae Education Foundation
Submitted by Education Development Center, Inc.
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Introduction

This report includes findings and analysis on the efforts of the Pittsfield Public School district in the Nellie Mae Education Foundation (NMEF) District-Level Systems Change (DLSC) initiative during the final year of grant funding. Organized by key domains of DLSC, the sections that follow provide an update to the main quantitative and qualitative findings presented in last year's 2016-17 (Phase Two, Year Two) report.

During the 2017-18 school year, Pittsfield continued to focus on core areas of student-centered learning (SCL), including competency-based learning, personalization, and student leadership. Throughout the year, school leaders engaged in a collaborative process of revisiting the district's mission and vision. Administrators held meetings to collect feedback from staff, students, and community members, with the goal of revising the district's guiding documents based on stakeholder input. There was also a districtwide initiative to bolster students' executive function skills, which administrators described as an important prerequisite to building the work-study habits essential for success in an SCL environment. For teachers, "focus groups" offered an opportunity to collaborate in small groups around an area of interest. Administrators are also looking to expand the extent to which Universal Design for Learning (UDL) informs lesson planning and classroom instruction. School leaders drew connections between UDL and SCL, and plan to make UDL a central focus of professional development during 2018-19.

Data Collection 2017-2018

During the 2017-2018 report cycle, the evaluation team collected data through interviews, observations, and online teacher and student questionnaires. In the spring of 2018, two members of the EDC evaluation team conducted a two-day site visit to Pittsfield. During the visit, the evaluators observed a whole-staff professional development session, two grade-level team meetings, and two meetings of student organizations.

Evaluators also conducted interviews with students, teachers, administrators, and staff at the local community partner. To analyze interviews, we developed qualitative analysis procedures to guide the team's work with the Max-QDA qualitative software and an initial coding scheme to capture discussion of important topics and perspectives from the interview data. The codes consisted of topics such as proficiency-based learning and personalized learning; experiences such as challenge and change; factors that influence implementation such as systemic factors; and power quotes that illustrate compelling points in the data. We coded a total of 11 interview transcripts collected from Pittsfield.

In spring 2018, the EDC teacher and student questionnaires were administered in the site. This was the seventh year of the teacher questionnaire in Pittsfield, and it was distributed to all faculty members. Nineteen teacher questionnaires were completed and used in analyses in this end-of-cycle report. The number of responses was comparable to previous years of administration (22 in 2017, 25 in 2016, 27 in 2015, 21 in 2014, 23 in 2013 and 21 in 2012).

The student questionnaire was administered for the sixth year to all students in grades 9-12. One hundred nineteen student questionnaires were submitted, and 106 were included in the

final analysis (compared to 130 used in analysis in 2017, 128 2016, 119 in 2015, 106 in 2014 and 81 in 2013). Evaluators excluded surveys that were blank, that had identical responses to all items, or for which student IDs could not be matched with associated population data. Below, Table 1 presents a breakdown of the sample.

Table 1. 2017-18 Student Sample and Population Demographics

	Sample Demographics		Population Demographics	
	#	%	#	%
All students	106	100%	165	100%
Free/reduced lunch	35	33%	66	40%
IEP	18	17%	*	*
ELL	Not reported; insufficient numbers			
AP/Honors	Not reported; insufficient numbers			

*Data unavailable.

Significance testing was conducted to analyze free/reduced lunch and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) subgroups. There were insufficient numbers of English Language Learners and AP/honors students in the sample to conduct analyses of responses from those subgroups.

Findings in Key Domains

Proficiency-based Learning and Assessment¹

Topic Summary

In Pittsfield, competencies continued to serve as the key framework for communicating learning objectives, designing assessments, and reporting on student progress. Pittsfield identifies as a competency-based school, and staff expressed confidence that the system of PBL will be sustained. Despite this commitment, qualitative data indicated that there is ongoing variation in the way teachers' implement PBL, evident in different assessment practices and interpretations of grading guidelines.

Quantitative data from the teacher questionnaire suggested that teachers' assessment practices remained consistent with the previous year. There was a substantial decrease, however, in teachers' perception of the extent to which PMHS supports students regulating their own learning. Student questionnaire results corroborated this trend, with a decrease in the percentage of students reporting that they move on to new work after demonstrating what they have learned. There were positive shifts, however, in the frequency with which students revised their work based on teacher feedback.

Strategies

Building on several years of experience with competencies, Pittsfield continued to evaluate and refine school-wide systems and practices to support PBL. During the 2017-18 school year, the Educational Leadership Team (ELT) took steps to foster greater consistency in competency-based grading and assessment practices among teachers. Specifically, the ELT reviewed and revised the grading policies described in the Student Family Handbook. In doing so, the ELT aimed to align official grading policies with teachers' practices and ensure that the handbook reflected current grading procedures. One administrator discussed how the process of revising the handbook encouraged teachers to compare and contrast their individual grading policies, in addition to sharing "best practices" with their grade-level teams.

Pittsfield continued to participate in the piloting of the Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE) program, New Hampshire's standardized testing program that measures student competency through authentic multi-day, multi-step performance tasks. In 2017-18, PACE was administered at the high school in some English, math, science, and art courses. A few teachers maintained leadership roles in the pilot process, participating in item development and representing Pittsfield at external PACE meetings.

Updated Findings

Pittsfield continues to appreciate the ways in which PBL benefits both students and teachers. Competencies provide students with clear learning objectives, while associated rubrics identify the specific skills and areas of knowledge students must demonstrate as evidence that they've met or exceeded each competency. An administrator praised competencies for affording

¹ For consistency across DLSC evaluation reports, the term "proficiency-based learning" is used here. In Pittsfield, the term is "competency-based learning."

students the opportunity to work at their own pace, utilize preferred learning strategies, and provide input regarding how they will demonstrate competency. Teachers valued the increased level of student accountability associated with the requirement to establish competency in all course requirements, along with the added flexibility in assessment options. This lengthy quote from a Pittsfield teacher provides an excellent description of the potential power of student-centered assessment methods to engage students in their learning:

It's like opening this tremendous door... it just gives me the opportunity to brainstorm, "Well, let's find a way that you can show mastery of this competency." That's the thing that I think is so valuable and I always say to the students, you're lucky to be in a school that embraces this model because it gives you the chance to really take more power about what you have to do. And the reason I have embraced that is because if I present a performance task to them and they're not finding it interesting or they start to do it and then they realize, "This is something I'm going to struggle with", I encourage them, "Let's brainstorm something that can show you still are proficient within the wide umbrella of that competency and do it your way." And two things I think happen. They think that the teacher's really on their side of helping them be successful. And then the second thing is that they think now they're a little bit more in control of what they're expected to do. And those two things I think are really, really pivotal....you even reach those students like even the ones [that struggle].

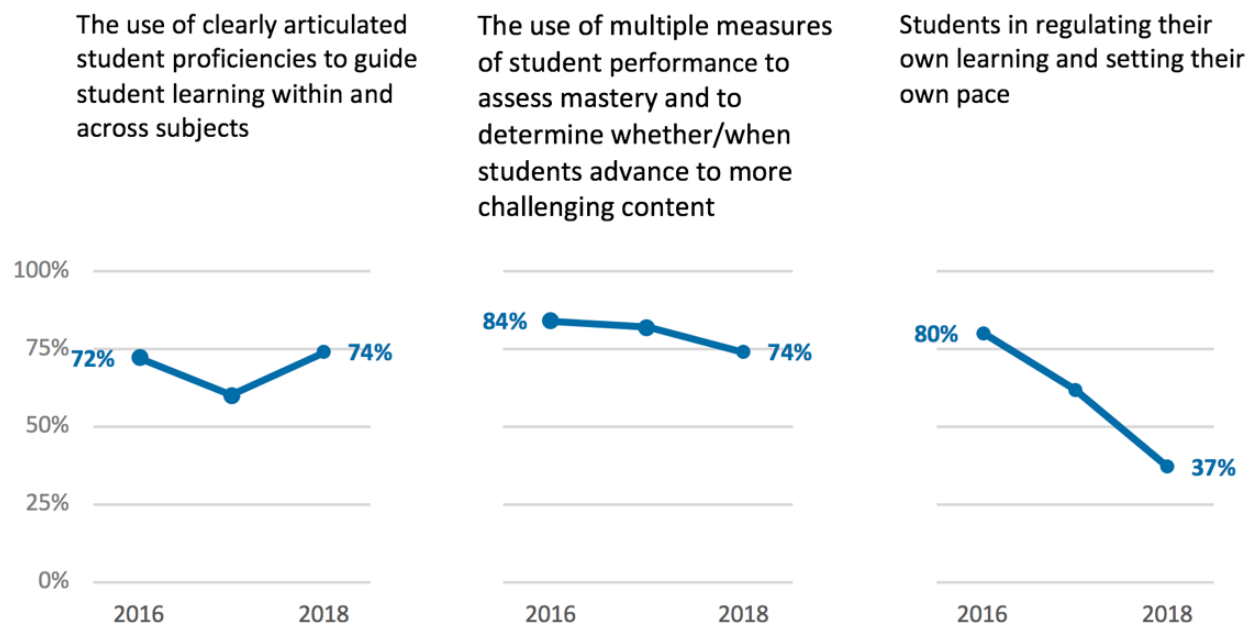
When asked about the sustainability of changes that occurred during DLSC, several teachers and administrators pointed to PBL as a system that is likely to endure at Pittsfield. Administrators noted that PBL has evolved from its days as a new initiative to become a firmly rooted system at PMHS. One staff member attributed the durability of PBL to the district's efforts to adapt school-wide systems and procedures to ensure alignment with the grading and assessment practices associated with PBL. For students, there is no longer a need to adjust to PBL, as all students have experienced competency-based courses since their seventh-grade entry into PMHS.

Although many staff members predicted that PBL would remain entrenched at Pittsfield, data from the 2018 teacher questionnaire provided mixed findings regarding teachers' perception of school-level support for PBL (see Figure 1). While perceived support for the use of proficiencies to guide student learning increased, there was a moderate decrease in perceived support for the use of multiple measures to assess mastery. A downward change was even more pronounced for the item, "My school supports students in regulating their own learning and setting their own pace," for which the percentage of teachers who responded with "to some extent" or "to a great extent" declined by over 40 percentage points during the past two years. The decrease in this item does correspond with ongoing concerns expressed in recent years about students' motivation to assume ownership over the pacing and structure of their learning. As one teacher noted:

We struggle with student motivation. So, true competency-based is students are motivated to do it on their own and they're just going to keep working. Because we have such low motivation we still have to be incentivizing by grades and by being on pace or off pace.

Figure 1. To what extent does your school support the following?

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who responded with “to some extent” or “to a great extent” on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent

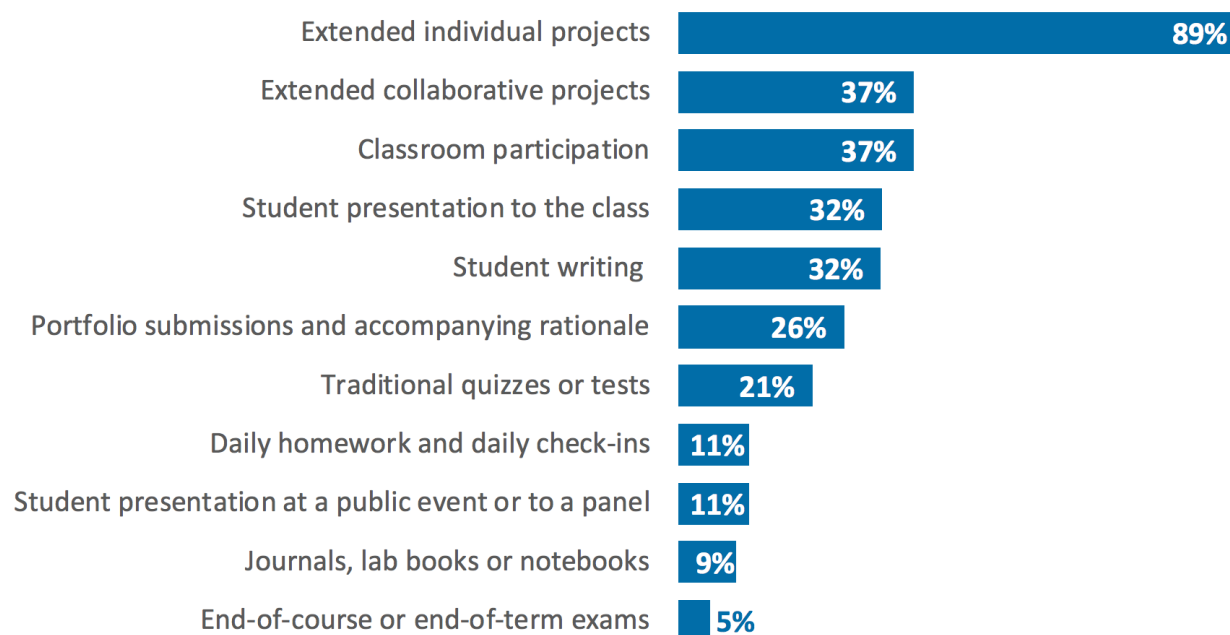


Assessment practices remained centered around performance-based tasks, including Pittsfield’s participation in New Hampshire’s pilot of PACE. Teachers and administrators continued to appreciate the theory and philosophy behind PACE, which aligns with PBL due its use of authentic, complex tasks to assess student competency. Despite PACE’s potential, teachers and administrators noted ongoing logistical challenges associated with the assessment. Both administering and scoring PACE required a significant investment of teachers’ time. In addition, the content and timing of the assessments didn’t always align with classroom curriculum. Perhaps more importantly, some teachers have not found the results particularly useful for improving classroom instruction.

Performance-based and project-based assessment practices remained prevalent at the classroom level. Data from the teacher questionnaire mirrored previous years’ results, with extended individual projects, extended collaborative projects, and classroom participation identified as the three most important methods of assessing student proficiency (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Three most important assessment methods for assessing student proficiency

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who selected each assessment method as one of the their three most important for assessing student proficiency

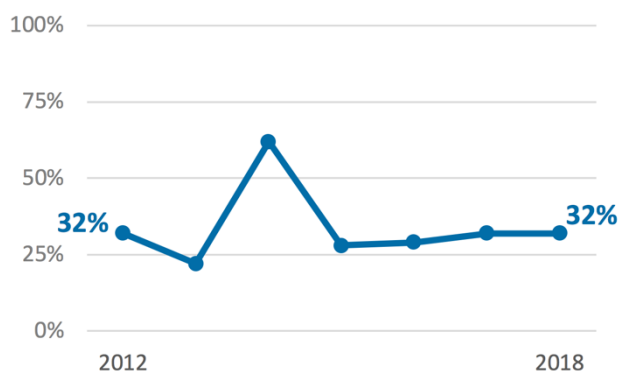


Despite the prevailing emphasis on extended projects and classroom participation as a form of assessment, only about one-third of teachers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Most teachers in my school have similar ideas about how student work should be assessed” (see Figure 3). With the exception of 2014—in which this figure spiked to approximately 60 percent—this data point has remained unchanged during DLSC.

The stagnation in this questionnaire item aligns with qualitative interview data, in which inconsistencies in grading and assessment practices emerged as a central challenge. Staff who shared these concerns suggested that stronger mechanisms to enforce and clarify grading practices could lead to more uniformity across courses. For example, one teacher noted that, even once a grading policy is enacted, teachers tend to interpret and apply the same policy in different ways. The same teacher went on to say that new policies aren’t always clearly communicated to students, which can result in a regression to previous practices. Another teacher described uncertainty about the systems for reviewing and revising teacher-developed competencies. Particularly in

Figure 3. Most teachers in my school have similar ideas about how student work should be assessed.

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or mixed, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree



instances where competencies could benefit from revision, it was unclear who held the authority to initiate corrections. Some noted that there are still teachers who have yet to “buy-in” to PBL and change their assessment practices accordingly. However, one staff member identified a need for further supports to help teachers modify their curriculum and assessment approach to match PBL:

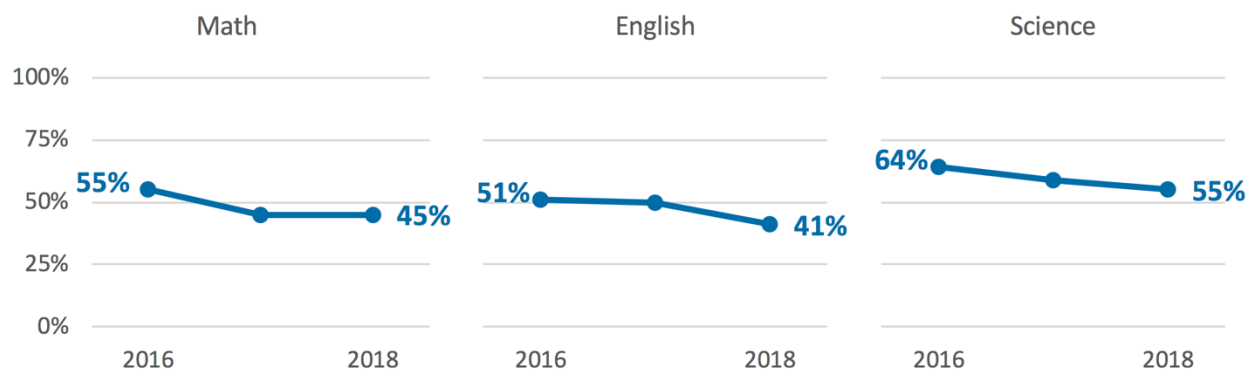
Although we’ve done a great job creating the competencies and creating those end goals...we haven’t been able to provide teachers with the support to create the curriculum....Although I was saying that we’re doing more traditional tests, it’s not really the teachers’ fault because we haven’t been able to provide them with the PD that they need in order to be more open-minded about the assessment piece.

Another explanatory factor could be the high rate of turnover in recent years, which has led to an increase in the number of new teachers who may still be adjusting to Pittsfield’s approach to assessment.

For students, PBL typically involves advancing to new competencies upon demonstrating proficiency and incorporating teacher feedback into new iterations of assignments. In Pittsfield, findings are mixed on the extent to which students experienced these practices in their classes. Over the past two years, the frequency with which students moved on to new work upon demonstrating competency declined moderately—about 10 percentage points—in math, English, and science (see Figure 4). Compared to other DLSC sites, math and English values for “I move on to new work when I can show what I have learned” were among the lowest, suggesting that students do not perceive their pacing in these courses as associated with their readiness to advance.

Figure 4. I move on to new work when I can show what I have learned.

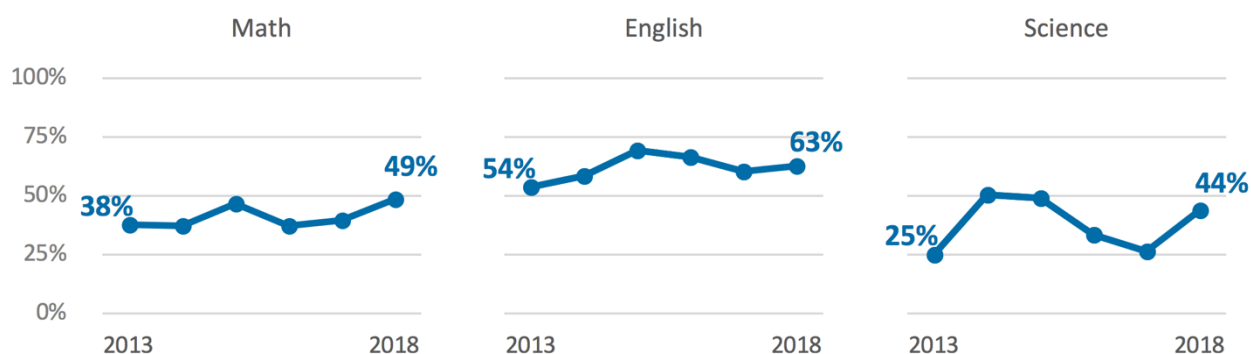
Student questionnaire: % of students who agreed or strongly agreed on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or mixed, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree



In contrast to the decrease in agreement for, “I move on to new work when I can show what I have learned,” the overall trend for the item, “I have to revise my work based on feedback from my teacher” has been positive (see Figure 5). This is especially true for science, for which the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed increased about 20 percentage points in the past year, returning to response values that were found in earlier years in the evaluation. In general, data suggests that students are increasingly expected to incorporate revisions into assignments.

Figure 5. I have to revise my work based on feedback from my teacher.

Student questionnaire: % of students who responded with often or every day on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = every day



There was also a substantial increase in the percentage of teachers who indicated that students incorporate feedback into their work either “often” or “every day”. Specifically, this figure increased by over 20 percentage points, from 39% in 2017 to 61% in 2018. This finding, combined with the recent increase in the percentage of students who reported revising their work based on teacher feedback either “often” or “every day” (see Figure 5), suggests a greater emphasis during the past year on the use of feedback to improve students’ work products. In interviews, one teacher described how teacher feedback can play a role in increasing student motivation:

I think something that’s sometimes overlooked is—just like with adults—[when] you have a clear sense of what you need to do differently, then you have more motivation to do so. So, when [teachers] are giving clear feedback about what [students] need to improve on and what they need to be - if they really understand what they’re trying to get to then they’re much more likely to go for it.

Instruction and Classroom Activities

Topic Summary

Teacher questionnaire data suggests that Pittsfield’s teachers continue to emphasize instruction that requires personalization and student self-regulation/academic tenacity. Other measures pointed to a small, yet perceptible shift away from some SCL and deeper learning practices, including an increase in classroom lectures and teacher-led discussions, alongside a decrease in student activities that involve collaboration or critical thinking. Students reported using technology in their classes at a rate similar to, or slightly less than, previous years.

Updated Findings

The majority of teachers reported that SCL-aligned instruction was a regular feature of their classrooms. Among most items asking teachers how often they provided instruction that required various components of SCL, such as personalization or self-regulation, the percentage of Pittsfield’s teachers who responded with “often” or “all the time” remained above 50% for most items (see Figure 6). However, some items declined last year, including notable decreases in the frequency of activities that require collaboration, critical thinking/problem solving, and anytime/anywhere learning. The drop in collaboration is somewhat puzzling, as—according to a different questionnaire item—83% of teachers reported that students work together in pairs or small groups on a regular basis (see Figure 9, p. 14).

Although data from the 2018 teacher questionnaire suggests that teacher-centered instructional practices are still the exception rather than the rule in Pittsfield, there are some signs that traditional activities have increased in prevalence during the past year. For example, the percentage of teachers who reported that students participate in teacher-led discussion or listen to a lecture either “often” or “every day” increased by at least 10 percentage points last year (see Figure 7). Despite these shifts, about 80 percent of teachers still indicated that it was either unimportant or minimally important to “provide instruction through extended formal presentation/lecture.” Moreover, by comparison, lectures and teacher-led discussions remain less frequent in Pittsfield than in almost all other DLSC sites.

Figure 6. In your classroom over the past year, how often did you provide instruction that required...

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who responded with “often” or “all the time” on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often, 4 = all the time

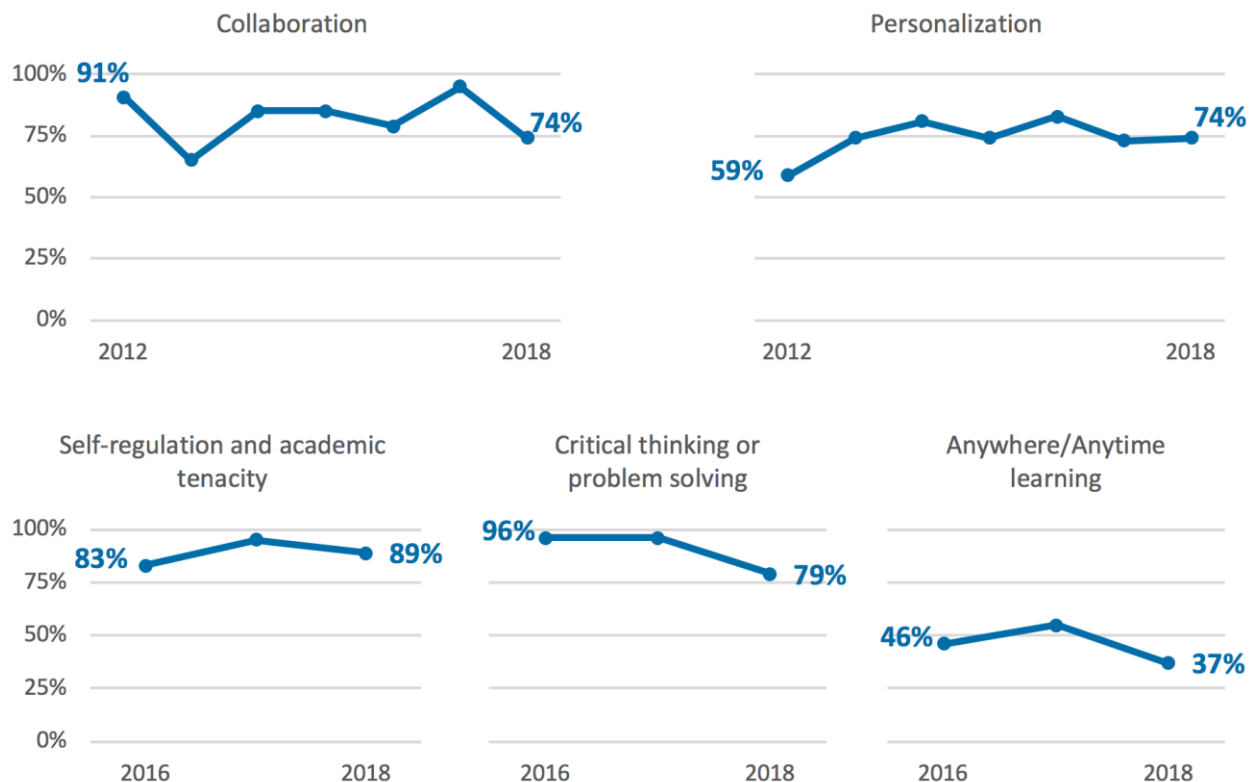
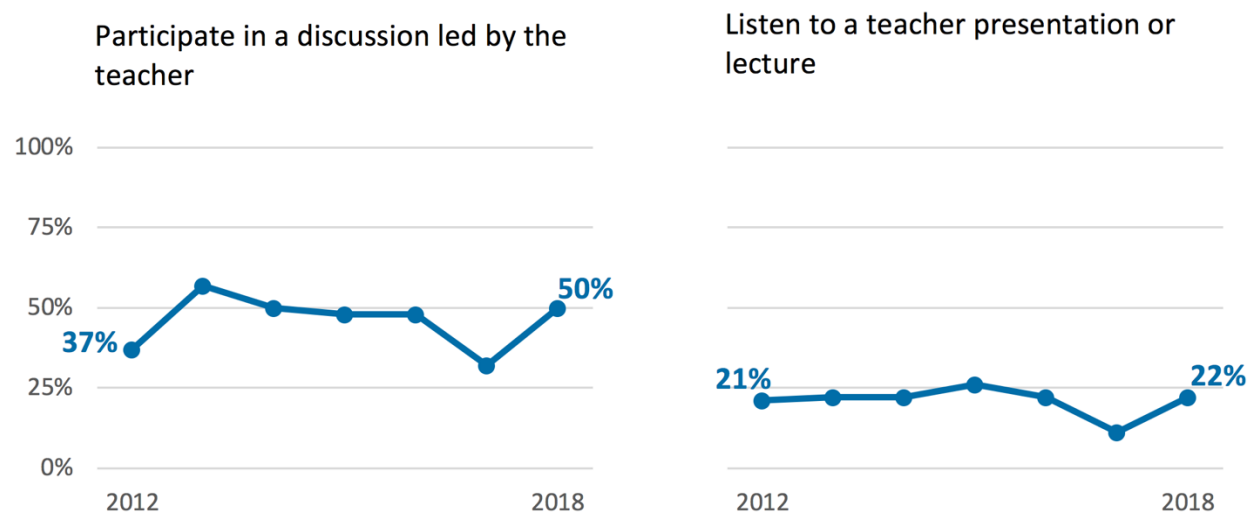


Figure 7. How often have students engaged in the following types of activities?

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who responded with “often” or “every day” on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = every day

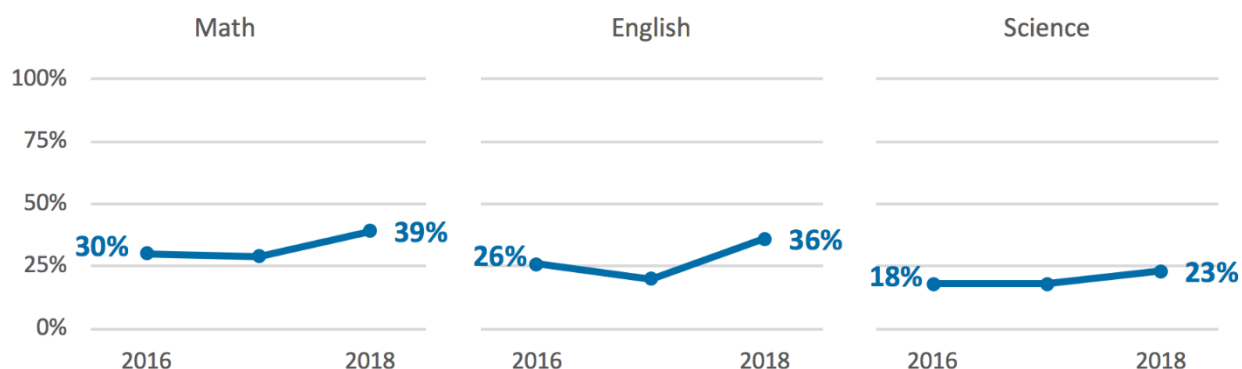


Outcomes from the student questionnaire provided some additional evidence that the frequency of classroom lectures increased over the last year, particularly in math and English (see Figure 8). There was little change over the past two years in the frequency with which students reported working independently on textbook or worksheet questions.

Figure 8. How often do the following things happen in your classes?

Student questionnaire: % of students who responded with “often” or “every day” on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = every day

The teacher spends half the class time or more giving a lecture or presentation.

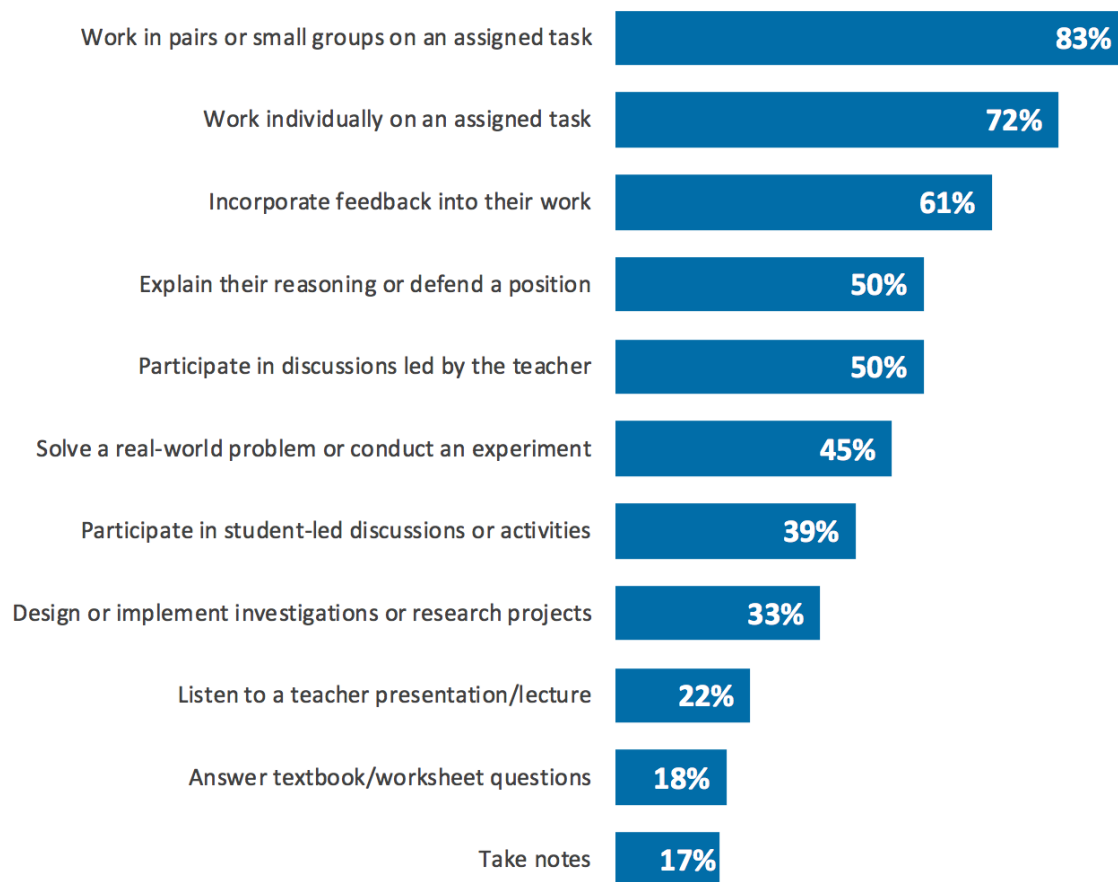


Despite some data suggesting that conventional classroom activities have become more common in recent years, teachers generally indicated that they allocate a substantial amount of class time for students to work on assignments, projects, or other learning tasks. At least half of responding teachers reported that students in their classes engaged in the following activities either “often” or “every day”: work together in pairs or small groups on an assigned task, work individually on an assigned task, or incorporate feedback into their work (see Figure 9). In contrast, activities traditionally associated with teacher-centered instruction, such as taking notes or completing worksheets, were rare in comparison.

Analyses of 2018 student questionnaire data regarding classroom instruction and activities revealed few notable changes during the past year. In a review of cross-site data, however, two items stood out for their low values relative to other DLSC sites: “I learn about things that connect to life outside the classroom” and “The teacher asks students to explain their answers.” The percentage of students who indicated that these activities happen “often” or “every day” was particularly low in math and science courses, suggesting that there may be room to expand the extent to which these courses cultivate students’ deeper learning skills.

Figure 9. How often have students engaged in the following types of activities?

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who responded with “often” or “every day” on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = every day



There was also little change during the past year in most 2018 student questionnaire items related to technology use. Two items, however, did decrease by at least ten percentage points. First, there was a moderate decline in the percentage of students who reported using the internet to do research or find information either often or every day (see Figure 10). Second, there was drop of similar magnitude in the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I use technology in my classes to move at my own pace on class assignments” (see Table 2). It should be noted that a majority of students still agreed or strongly agreed with most statements related to the use of technology to personalize learning despite the relatively unchanged or decreasing trend data for several measures of technology use.

Figure 10. How often do you do the following things using computers or technology in your classes?

Student questionnaire: % of students who responded with “often” or “every day” on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = every day

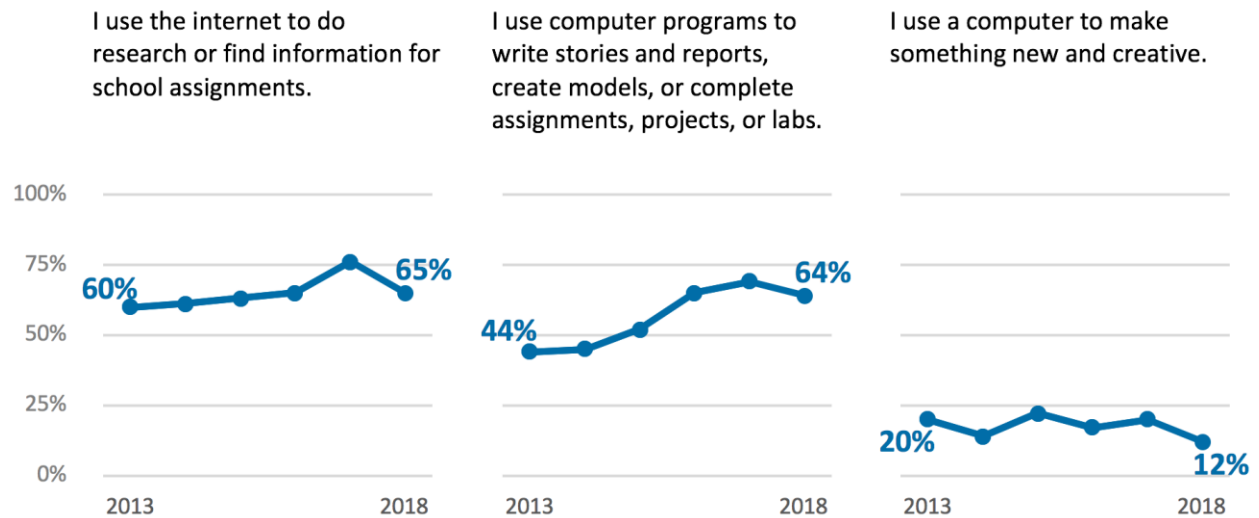


Table 2. I use technology in my classes to...

Student questionnaire: % of students who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree

	2016	2017	2018
Move at my own pace on class assignments	68%	71%	60%
Access challenging course content	67%	57%	57%
Pursue topics I'm interested in	77%	76%	70%
Support my learning anytime, anywhere	75%	76%	68%
Collaborate with other students on class assignments	71%	70%	62%
Communicate on social media or do things other than my school work	65%	64%	54%
Submit assignments	86%	86%	83%

Personalization

Topic Summary

Several opportunities for personalized learning are available to Pittsfield students via Learning Studios, Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs), courses at Concord Regional Technical Center, and dual enrollment programs. Staff reported some changes in student interest in these opportunities, with fewer students participating in ELOs, and more students enrolling in online or dual enrollment courses. In the classroom, students often have “voice and choice” in what and how they learn. During interviews, teachers shared strategies they use to promote personalization in their courses, and administrators expressed increasing interest in UDL as a framework to advance differentiation of the curriculum.

Data from the teacher questionnaire continued to underscore the high priority teachers place on personalizing instruction. Student questionnaire outcomes related to voice and choice in the classroom remained relatively unchanged, but values for items assessing the extent to which students receive targeted scaffolding to support their learning needs continued to decline modestly.

Strategies

As in past years, Pittsfield maintained several programs that provided student choice and flexible pathways towards graduation. Most of these programs were developed or expanded through DLSC, including, Learning Studios, dual enrollment opportunities with nearby community colleges, ELOs, and online coursework.

There are multiple schoolwide strategies in place to provide students with personalized academic support. During common planning time, for instance, teachers review student-level data regarding course completion and progress towards graduation. Based on this review, teachers can nominate students to receive additional support from school administrators. Pittsfield also continued to dedicate time each day to an advisory period, which remained a credit-earning requirement for students. Further, the school participates in New Hampshire’s RENEW program, which is an intervention designed to help struggling students. RENEW students meet weekly with a teacher facilitator to set goals and identify additional sources of support.

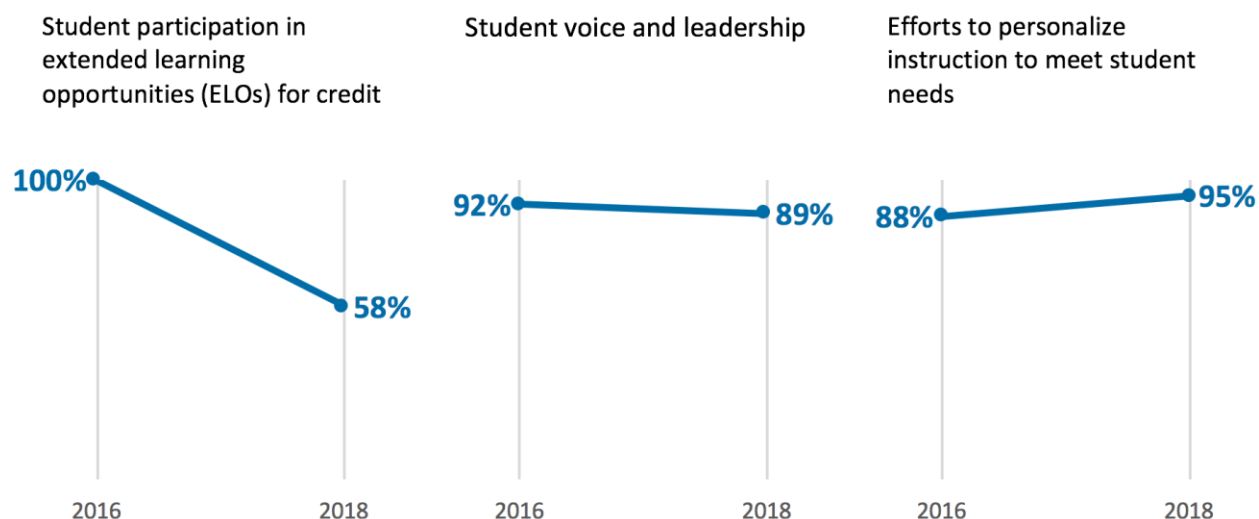
Administrators remain interested in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and its potential to bolster personalization and targeted scaffolding in the classroom. UDL is seen as a natural fit for student-centered learning due to its emphasis on “meeting kids where they are” and incorporation of strategies to ensure that learning is accessible for all students. At the time of our visit, staff planned to offer several UDL-focused professional development opportunities during the 2018-19 school year.

Updated Findings

Data from the teacher questionnaire suggested that teachers continued to place a high priority on providing students with personalized learning experiences. In response to questions asking about school-level support for personalization, teachers indicated that Pittsfield maintains high levels of support for personalized instruction and opportunities for student voice and leadership (see Figure 11).

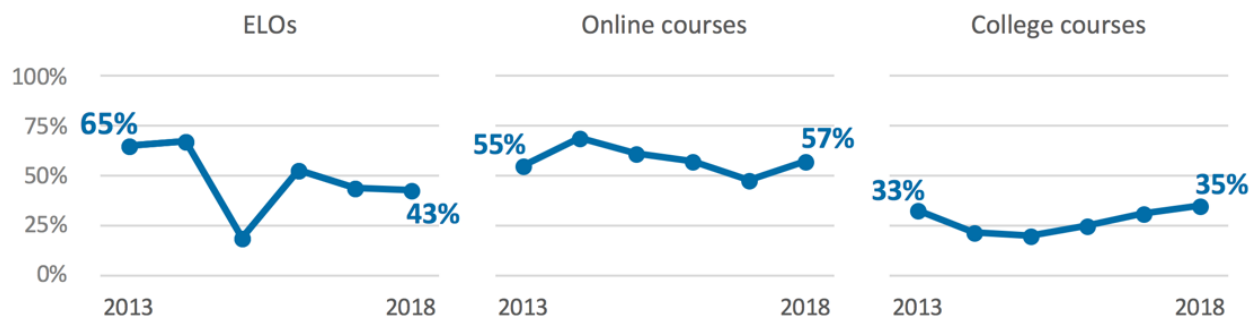
Figure 11. To what extent does your school support the following?

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who indicated “to some extent” or “to a great extent” on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent



Perceived support for student participation in ELO’s continued to decline, a trend associated with the overall decrease in ELO enrollment (see Figures 11 and 12). In interviews, several staff commented on the drop in ELO participation in recent years. According to the SQ, participation rates have fallen by over 20 percentage points since 2013. Some staff were puzzled by this change, unsure why students were not taking full advantage of the opportunity to pursue their interests and explore career options. Others explained that the ELO program has struggled to identify an appropriate level of rigor—one that challenges students academically while setting manageable expectations. One staff member also hypothesized that students with limited space in their schedules might opt for dual enrollment over an ELO due to the possibility of earning college credit through the dual enrollment course. Administrators anticipating revisiting the ELO program with an eye towards changes that could help the program meets students’ needs.

Figure 12. Percentage of students who participated in alternative learning opportunities



During our site visit, both students and teachers noted that online courses have gained in popularity among students. This perception is supported by the SQ data, which suggested a small increase in online course enrollment last year. Interviewees seemed to value online courses as a way to provide students with an expanded menu of elective options that align with their interests. One staff member described how students can also blend online and in-person learning units depending on their preferences:

I think the majority of teachers here are really flexible. I've even had teachers allow a student to take a unit online. And then, after they're done with that unit, pop back into the class and gain competency credit for a unit [completed] online instead of in the class...So I've seen a lot of different modalities of being able to learn the competencies and demonstrate their knowledge of those competencies.

Participation in college-level coursework has also increased by about 10 percentage points since 2015. Taken together, data from quantitative and qualitative sources suggests a trend in which students are looking to online courses or college courses to personalize their pathways toward graduation.

Evidence from the teacher questionnaire further indicated that personalization was a key feature of teachers' approach to classroom instruction. Asked how often they provided instruction that required personalization, 74 percent of teachers responded with "often" or "all the time" (see Figure 6). This figure represents an overall increase from the beginning of the initiative and is one of the highest values across DLSC schools. Moreover, 89 percent of teachers reported that it was "quite important" or "most important" to their instruction to "differentiate activities or instruction to meet individual students' needs" and to "make connections between content or activities and students' personalized learning pathways."

In interviews, teachers discussed strategies to promote personalization, including connecting the curriculum to students' lives, providing specific feedback, and using formative assessments to "adjust and change what individual students are doing." One teacher, however, cautioned against a push towards personalization in the absence of structured guidelines. This individual went on to describe teachers' perspectives on personalization as a continuum ranging from "This is my curriculum. [Students] have to do this" to "[Students] can do whatever they want." Although the latter option may hold more potential for personalized learning, students can struggle to meet expectations when tasks are completely open-ended. From this teacher's perspective, students are often best served by a balanced approach, in which teachers build options in to the designated curriculum, or offer students the ability to propose adjustment to assignments.

Student questionnaire data regarding voice and choice in the classroom remained fairly constant in recent years (see Figures 13 and 14). Since 2016, the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the items, "The teacher involves students in making decisions about their classwork" and "I get to choose how I show the teacher what I have learned" changed by only five percentage points or less. There is a notable gap between subjects for "I get to choose how I show the teacher what I have learned," suggesting that students perceive greater flexibility in English and sciences assessments than in math assessments.

Figure 13. The teacher involves students in making decisions about their classwork.

Student questionnaire: % of students who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or mixed, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

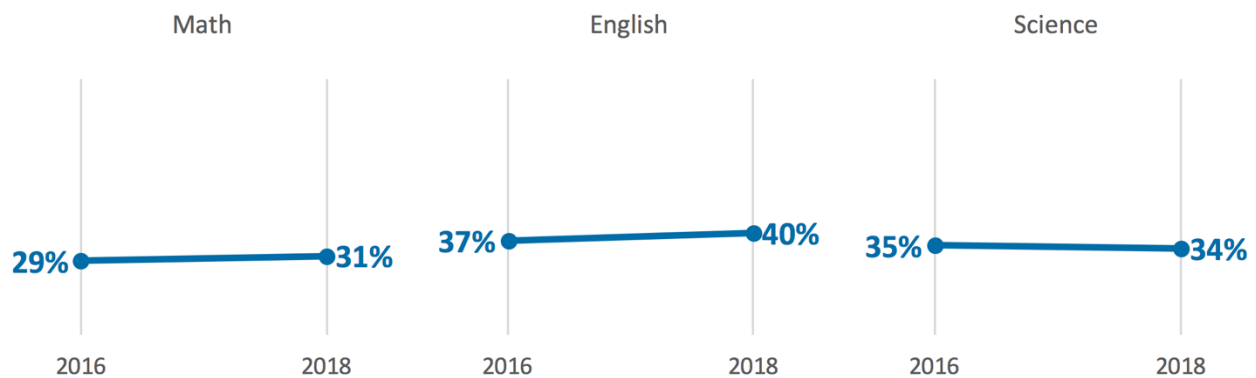
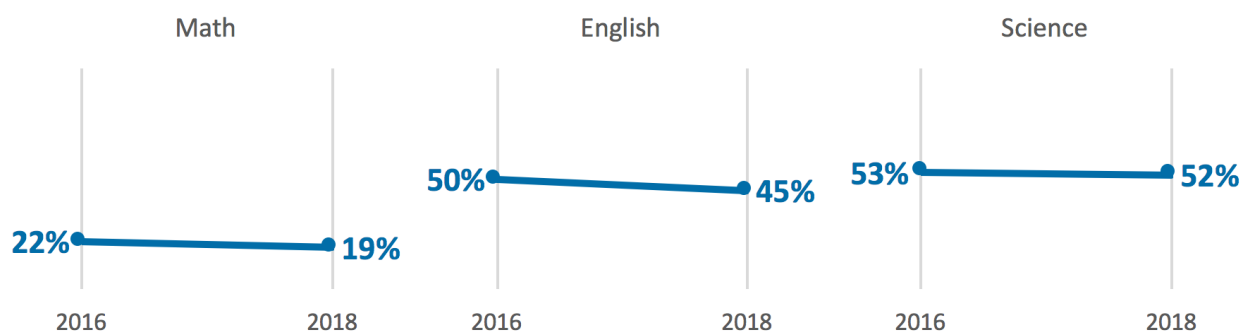


Figure 14. I get to choose how I show the teacher what I have learned.

Student questionnaire: % of students who responded with “often” or “every day” on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = every day

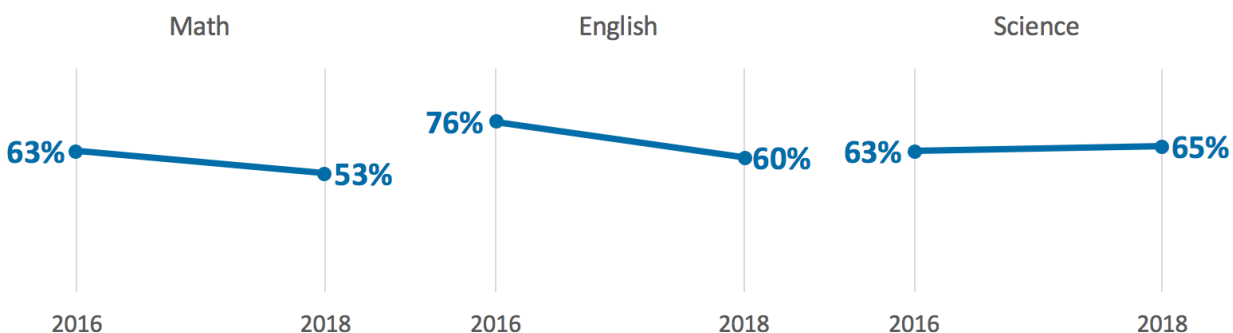


While data related to student voice and choice remained relatively constant, most items measuring another key element of personalization—teacher support—continued a gradual downward trend (see Figures 15 and 16). Further, the percentage of students who agreed with the statements, “The teacher gives me the help I need when I’m stuck” and “The teacher assigns work that is appropriately challenging” were among the lowest across DLSC sites. Moreover, trend data for items assessing teacher support have remained either remained unchanged or declined slightly since the beginning of the initiative (see Figure 16).

Figure 15. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your classes?

Student questionnaire: % of students who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or mixed, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

The teacher gives me the help I need when I'm stuck.



The teacher assigns work that is appropriately challenging (not too hard but not too easy).

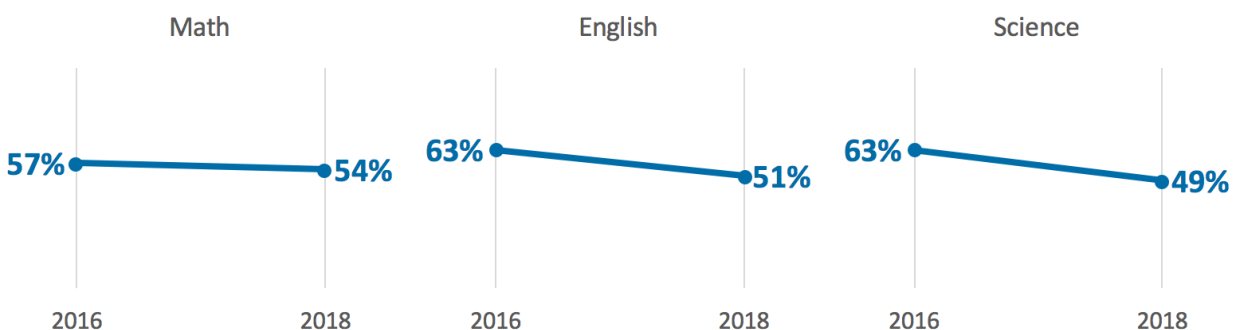
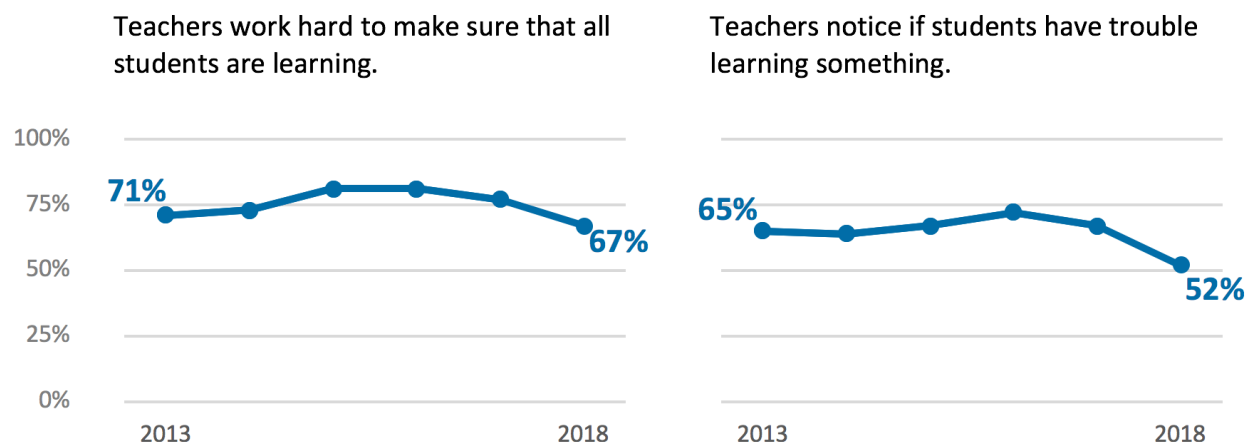


Figure 16. Thinking about your school, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Student questionnaire: % of students who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree



Collaborative Culture and Professional Learning

Topic Summary

Pittsfield dedicates time each week for teachers to collaborate and participate in professional development, both as an entire staff and within grade-level teams. During the 2017-18 school year, time for faculty collaboration was included in teachers' contracts, signaling the extent to which teachers value guaranteed time to work together. Interview data suggested some dissatisfaction with the amount of teacher ownership and deliberation in collaborative decision-making processes and professional development opportunities.

Quantitative findings related to collaborative culture and professional development were mixed. Collaborative culture trends tended to be positive, especially for items related to working together or observation. In contrast, many measures of professional development have declined, both within the past year and during DLSC.

Strategies

Pittsfield continues to dedicate time to weekly all-staff professional development meetings via "Late Start Wednesdays." During the spring semester of the 2017-18 school year, teachers used Late Start Wednesdays to work in small groups ("focus groups") focused on one of four topic areas—discipline, minimum expectations for student work, scheduling, and courage to teach. The focus groups were characterized by a high level of teacher ownership—the four topic areas were identified by the staff, and teachers self-selected into the focus group of greatest interest. Each focus group spent the semester reflecting on its assigned topic and brainstorming new policies or activities designed to improve associated outcomes. During the site visit, we observed a Late Start Wednesday session in which one focus group shared its final product—a proposed policy for minimum expectations related to students' written work. The entire staff had the opportunity to discuss the new policy and vote on its adoption, underscoring Pittsfield's efforts to involve teachers in schoolwide decision making.

Teachers also have daily common planning time, in which they meet with grade-level or subject-area teams. Teachers use this time to collaborate around learning and instruction, address issues of concern, and review student progress.

Staff anticipate that both opportunities for collaboration—Late Start Wednesday and common planning time—will be sustained for the foreseeable future. In fact, the most recent teacher contract included guaranteed time for these activities, signifying the value teachers place on maintaining embedded time to work together. In reference to the permanence of Late Start Wednesdays and common planning time, one teacher said "Those kinds of things have become our culture now and it's become so much of a culture that teachers put it in our contract...So, that to me is big." Another staff member noted that Late Start Wednesdays and common planning time are especially helpful given Pittsfield's high turnover rate, as they provide new teachers with regular opportunities to interact with colleagues and learn about Pittsfield's approach to assessment and instruction.

Updated Findings

Findings from the 2018 teacher questionnaire suggested several positive shifts in collaborative culture during the past year (see Figure 17). Specifically, there was an upward trend in the percentage of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with items appraising the frequency with which teachers learned from each other through conversations and observations. There was a particularly sharp increase in agreement for the statement, “Most teachers at my school have opportunities to observe one another teach.” In interviews, one administrator noted that humanities teachers set aside time during the 2017-18 year to observe their colleagues’ classrooms, which may account for the notable shift in this item. Further, teachers and administrators spoke positively about opportunities to work with colleagues through common planning time and Late Start Wednesdays. For example, one staff member described the Late Start Wednesday focus groups as, “the best thing I did all year,” while another noted that common planning time teams were “more collaborative” than in years past.

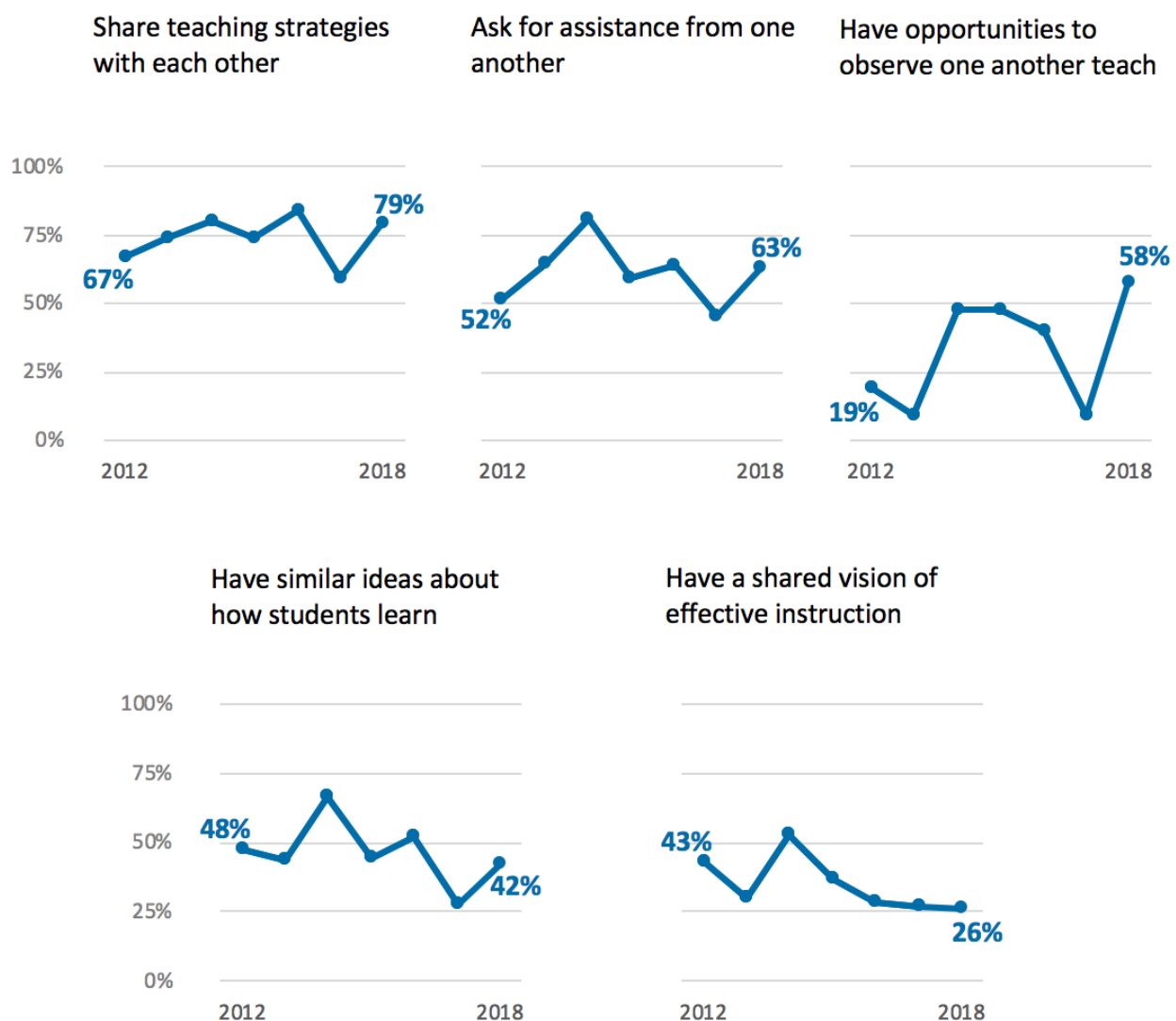
Despite several positive changes in collaborative culture data over the past year, findings continue to suggest that teachers hold different views of effective instruction and assessment. Evidence for this claim comes from two items—“Most teachers in my school have a shared vision of effective instruction” (see Figure 17) and “Most teachers in my school have similar ideas about how student work should be assessed” (see Figure 3, p. 8)—both of which remained relatively unchanged over the past three to four years.

Qualitative data further supported these findings, with some teachers noting that philosophical disagreements remain, especially around proficiency-based learning and assessment. Policies around late submissions of student work serve as one example of this type of divide. Whereas some teachers want to prioritize the content and quality of student work regardless of its punctuality, others feel that the time management skills needed to meet deadlines deserve equal or even higher priority. Teachers also discussed variation in the day-to-day details of recording students’ grades. Further, teacher turnover continues to be a concern, as new teachers often require a period of adjustment to adapt to Pittsfield’s approach to competencies and classroom instruction.

Some staff also expressed frustration with the practices guiding schoolwide deliberation and decision-making. Interviewees explained that, in previous years, proposals to change or introduce a policy were often discussed at length, with sufficient time for teachers to engage in one-on-one conversations with colleagues and share individual perspectives with each other. Recently, however, staff said there has been a shift towards swift decision-making via majority vote, with less focus on consensus building and communication. Some felt that a return to the previous system could support teachers’ capacity to “work together as a faculty.” Other staff conveyed a sense that new or revised policies are inconsistently communicated and followed, potentially contributing to variation in teachers’ practices. Those who shared this view suggested strengthening the process through which policies are identified for review, communicated to the school community, and implemented consistently.

Figure 17. Most teachers in my school...

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or mixed, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree



Teacher questionnaire data related to professional development suggested a general decrease during the past year in teachers' satisfaction with their professional development experiences. There was an especially notable decline (20 percentage points or more) in the percentage of teachers who indicated that they have time to reflect on what they've learned and how to apply it, and who indicated receiving sufficient professional development to implement student-centered learning practices. Further, a review of trend data from the duration of the initiative suggests a substantial drop over time in the extent to which teachers feel a sense of agency related to their professional development. Specifically, the items "I am involved in planning my professional development" and "I am encouraged to develop an individual professional development plan" have decreased in most years of data collection, resulting in an overall downward trend. In interviews, one staff member pointed out that teachers do have the option to differentiate their individual professional development. For those who prefer to

participate in all-staff professional development, however, one teacher noted that such sessions could benefit from more teacher input and greater attention to teachers' learning needs.

In contrast to the decline in several professional development items, there have been substantial positive shifts in teachers' perspectives of some aspects of professional development, both during DLSC and in the last year. One item for which levels of agreement have remained high in comparison to other DLSC sites is, "In my school, I am encouraged to experiment with my teaching" (see Figure 18). Further, during the last year, there was a sharp increase in the percentage of teachers who indicated an interest in pursuing professional development opportunities based on SCL. The 2018 value for this item is about the same as it was during the first year of data collection, suggesting that teachers remain interested in learning about SCL practices.

Figure 18. To what extent is each of the following statements true?

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who indicated "to some extent" or "to a great extent" on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent

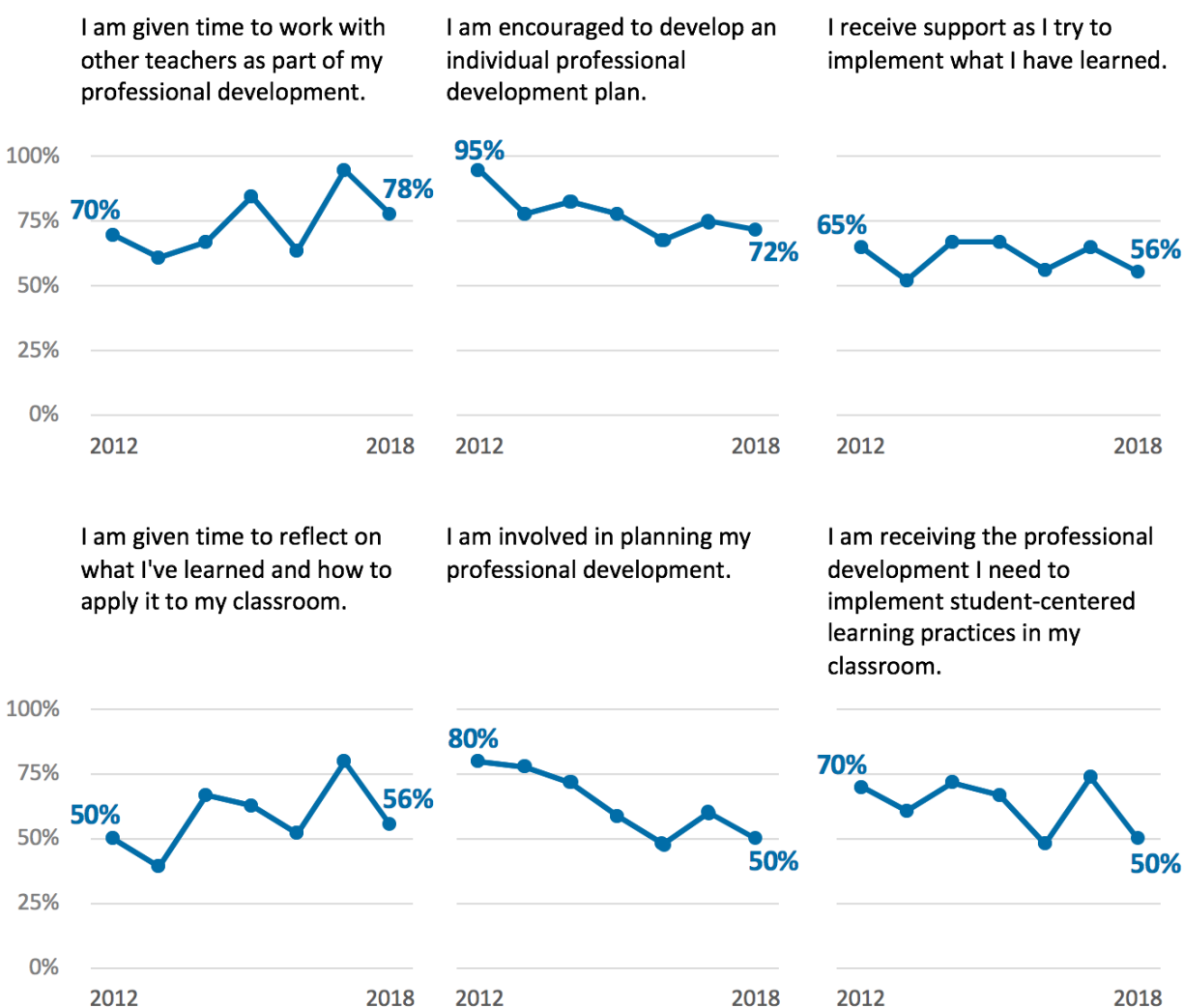
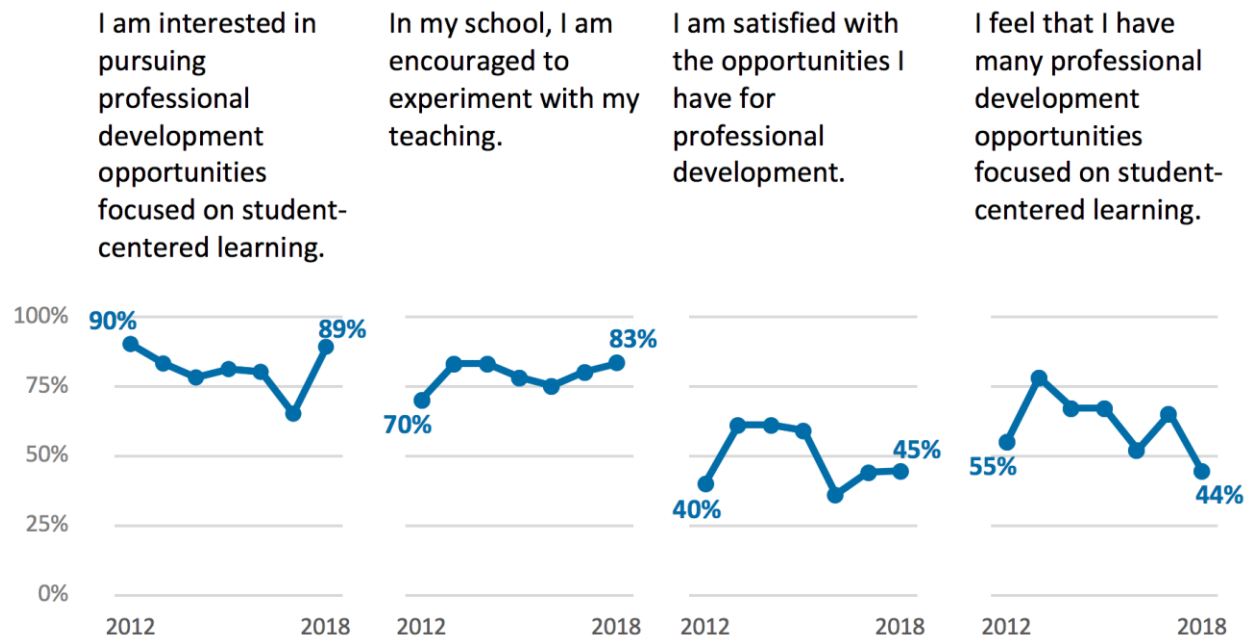


Figure 19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or mixed, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree



Academic Mindset and Tenacity

Topic Summary

Several interviews with teachers and administrators involved discussions of student motivation, executive functioning, and work-study habits—terms that encompass students’ ability to self-regulate their learning and behavior, persist through challenging tasks, and demonstrate a growth mindset. Comments shared by staff indicated that Pittsfield is acutely aware of the critical role these skills play in a student-centered learning environment. As such, the school has continued implementing strategies to bolster students’ ability to assume a greater level of ownership over their education. Measures of academic mindset and students’ perceptions of high expectations were often lower at Pittsfield than other DLSC sites, with trends generally decreasing or remaining unchanged.

During the 2017-18 school year, Pittsfield initiated a schoolwide focus on executive function skills. As part of advisory, students learned about specific executive function skills such as organization, metacognition, and time management. Advisors shared relevant strategies and dedicated a follow-up session for students to reflect on their application of each skill. Staff reported that the new program has resulted in a common understanding and shared language around executive functioning. Administrators hoped the new program would lead to consistency across classrooms and grade levels in the way teachers and students discuss and apply executive function skills. Pittsfield also views the RENEW program as an approach to develop related skills, such as goal-setting and identifying sources of support.

Updated Findings

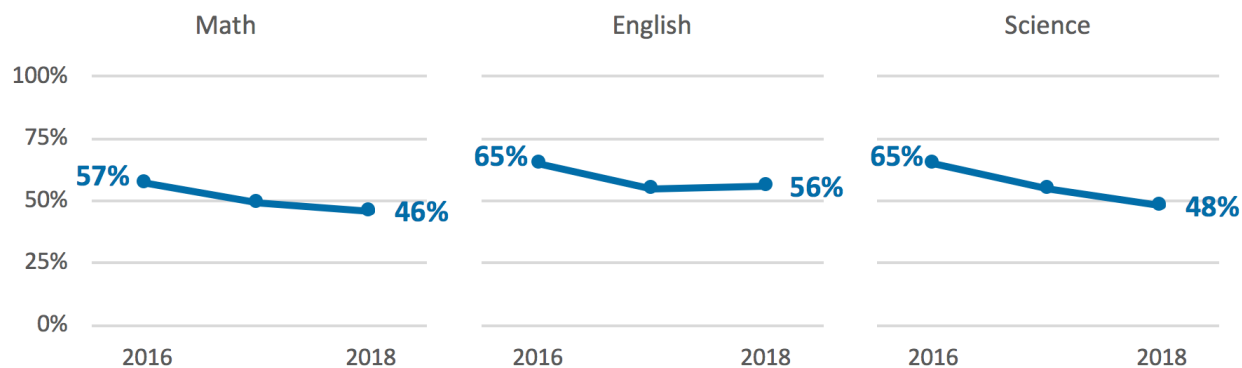
The 2017-18 evaluation cycle marked the third year of data collection for most student questionnaire items related to academic mindset and tenacity. Outcomes for many items either declined slightly or remained unchanged during the past year. In comparison to other DLSC sites, values were often among the lowest, suggesting that academic mindset and tenacity continues to be a particularly challenging area in Pittsfield.

In general, responses to questions about perseverance and personal expectations in math, English, and science indicated a continued decline in students’ confidence in their ability to succeed in these courses. Across all three subject areas, the percentage of responding students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements, “When the work gets difficult, I don’t give up” and “I believe I can succeed in achieving the learning goals in this class” typically fell by at least ten percentage points during the past two years (see Figure 20). One exception appears for math, where there was a slight increase last year for the item “I believe I can succeed in achieving the learning goals in this class.”

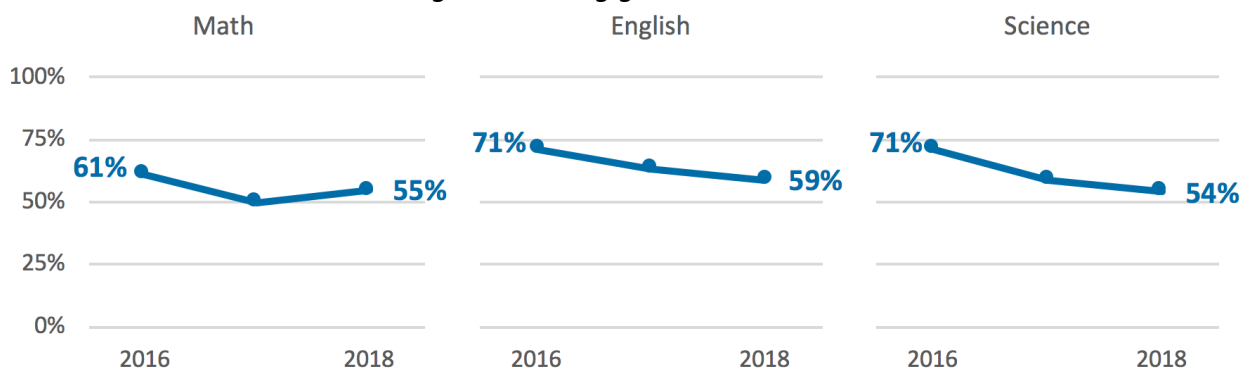
Figure 20. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your classes?

Student questionnaire: % of students who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral or mixed, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

When the work gets difficult, I don't give up.



I believe I can succeed in achieving the learning goals in this class.



There is also evidence to suggest that a considerable portion of Pittsfield's students and teachers do not perceive high expectations as a part of Pittsfield's academic culture. Although there was a slight increase in the percentage of teachers who indicated that Pittsfield supports the expectation that all students can reach high standards, either to some extent or to a great extent, this figure remains one of the lowest values in comparison to other DLSC sites (see Figure 21). Data resulting from items asking about students' perception of the extent to which teachers and administrators hold high expectations have varied little over time, with around 70% of students agreeing with these statement in 2018 (see Figure 22).

Despite Pittsfield's efforts over the years to improve students' academic perseverance and executive functioning, teachers continued to express concerns about student motivation and work-study habits. In particular, teachers noted that some students are challenged to complete the types of self-directed, open-ended projects typically associated with SCL. Pittsfield's recent experience with ELOs serves as one example. During the site visit, staff explained that both the enrollment and completion rates for ELOs have declined recently. Some attributed the lower enrollment rate (at least in part) to students' reluctance to opt in to a challenging course. Others said that a notable number of students who do enroll in an ELO end up "overwhelmed"—especially with the more rigorous components such as research—and may even withdraw from the course. Beyond work-study skills, some staff felt that students could benefit from more structure and adult guidance when undertaking self-directed learning experiences, such as ELOs, competency recovery plans, or open-ended projects. Even with such supports in place, Pittsfield views executive functioning skills as an essential ingredient for student success in an SCL environment. As one staff member shared:

We really feel that as you listen to the students, personalized learning, multiple pathways, choices, and responsibility for their own learning really you need strong executive functioning for that. You need to be organized. You need to be motivated. You have to have meta cognition. You have to have time management....That's why we really spent time on that executive functioning.

Figure 21. My school supports the expectation that all students can reach high standards.

Teacher questionnaire: % of teachers who responded with "to some extent" or "to a great extent" on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = not at all, 2 = to a small extent, 3 = to some extent, 4 = to a great extent

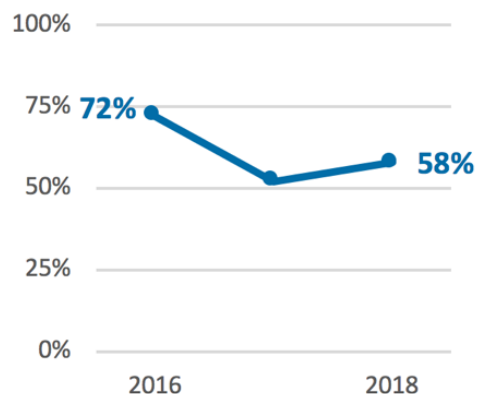
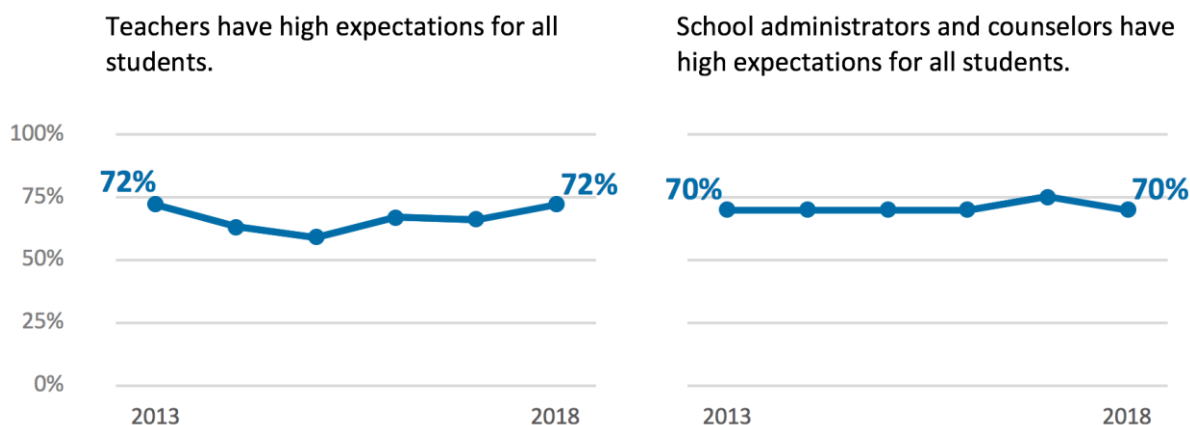


Figure 22. Thinking about your school, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Student questionnaire: % of students who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree



Equity

Topic Summary

Conversations with a range of stakeholders indicated that, while equity has been a focus in Pittsfield over the course of the initiative, there was greater emphasis on issues of equity in recent years. The heightened focus on SCL has led to greater attention to personalization and targeted student supports, which has informed discussions of equity more broadly in the school and how to help each student succeed. Currently, staff are appraising the extent to which the current system of PBL is equitable for student with disabilities. Analyses of student questionnaire outcomes by student subgroup found a limited number of statistically significant differences, suggesting that students' perceptions of their SCL experiences do not tend to vary much by FRL or IEP status.

Updated Findings

During our site visit, staff shared that the focus on student-centered learning during DLSC has led to greater understanding, interest, and attention to issues of equity in Pittsfield. In particular, teachers and administrators explained that DLSC has raised awareness of the intersections between poverty, trauma, disabilities and students' academic experiences and outcomes. With a high-needs student population, Pittsfield is starting to look towards universal design for learning (UDL) as a framework for providing classroom learning experiences that will be accessible to all students. As mentioned above in the section on Personalization, Pittsfield plans to make UDL a core focus of its 2018-19 professional development sessions, with the goal of helping teachers develop lesson plans guided by UDL principles. One administrator explained why UDL is seen as a promising strategy for differentiating instruction to meet students' needs:

The thing that we've kind of [focused] on recently is all the research around how poverty affects kids, and how trauma, previous experiences with traumatic experiences have influenced kids in their ability to learn. So if you put all of those kids together: kids with disabilities, kids who have experienced trauma, kids who have lived in poverty all their life, and typical learners, if you are going to kind of create a setting, an educational setting that's going to meet those kids' needs individually as well as in groups, then I think all that UDL science really makes a lot of sense.

Although student-centered learning has spurred greater attention to each students' unique learning needs, some staff questioned whether certain aspects of SCL might have negative consequences for educational equity. Specific concerns centered around the demands of student ownership and the implications of PBL for students with disabilities. For example, one teacher explained that, although the flexibility in assessment options has been a positive shift towards equity, the higher level of student ownership required by SCL can pose challenges for students without sufficient support outside of school. Similar to other schools in the DLSC initiative that have moved towards PBL, Pittsfield is also challenged to ensure that competency-based grading and assessment is equitable for students with disabilities. Administrators conveyed a heightened awareness of the need—at both the state- and school-level—to “retrofit” the system of PBL with greater consideration to the needs of special education students. At the local level, Pittsfield is taking steps to encourage flexible assessment options that accommodate students' individual learning disabilities.

In addition to considering equity of experiences and outcomes between students within the district, several staff also discussed the inequitable distribution of resources between Pittsfield and other school districts in the region or state. Teachers and administrators remain concerned that Pittsfield students do not have the same access to opportunities and supports as students in districts with higher funding levels, due to disparities sustained by the state funding formulas to school districts. Many in Pittsfield acknowledged that the DLSC grant was instrumental in providing funding for staff to oversee new initiatives such as the ELO program and a Community Liaison position. As one staff member said, “The grant was really able to help us look like every other district, with providing the essential components that really help to make the district run well.” Without grant funding, staff positions that support student programs, such as ELOs or the RENEW program, may be scaled back or eliminated. There is also a concern that students will be impacted by the absence of staff positions designed to support teachers, such as curriculum coordinators or coaches.

Analysis of the student questionnaire by subgroups found some statistically significant differences between the experiences of students with and without IEPs. Last year, our 2017 analyses resulted in a substantial number of significant differences between IEP and non-IEP subgroups. In 2018, however, there were not nearly as many significant differences between these groups. As such, there is some evidence to suggest that the 2017 outcomes may have been a one-time variation instead of a long-term pattern. Statistically significant differences resulting from the 2018 SQ were primarily associated with students’ classroom experiences in math courses. Most differences indicated that certain elements of student-centered learning were present in math classes to a greater extent for IEP students compared to non-IEP students. For example, IEP students’ reported higher mean response values than non-IEP students for “I learn about things that connect to life outside the classroom” and “I get to choose how I show the teacher what I have learned.” However, values for the item, “The teacher expects us to work through challenging tasks without giving up” were lower for IEP students, suggesting that they may perceive lower expectations in math compared to non-IEP peers.

Subgroup analyses revealed few differences between students who are eligible and ineligible for free- or reduced-price lunch. There were only two items for which differences between groups were statistically significant and associated with at least a moderate effect size—“I move on to new work when I can show what I have learned—Science” and “I believe I can succeed in achieving the learning goals in this class—Science”. For both items, mean response values were higher for FRL students than for non-FRL students. These outcomes indicate that FRL students may perceive a stronger sense of personalized pacing and self-efficacy in their science courses compared to non-FRL students. The limited number of statistically significant differences between FRL and non-FRL students continues a trend from previous years suggesting that student experiences and outcomes measured by the student questionnaire do not differ substantially between the two groups. The absence of numerous significant differences between FRL and non-FRL students in 2015-2018 suggests that gaps in student engagement between these groups have been reduced or eliminated since the evaluation first conducted subpopulation analyses in 2014.

Student Engagement and Outcomes

Topic Summary

Results from the teacher questionnaire suggested that teachers maintained high levels of involvement with the DLSC initiative in 2017-18. Data related to perceived impact of the initiative decreased last year, with teachers reporting lower values for impact on instruction and student learning experiences than in previous years.

Data from both the teacher and student questionnaire pointed to the absence of sustained effects of DLSC on student engagement. Teachers reported a lower level of impact on student engagement than in early-to-mid years of the initiative. This impression was corroborated by the outcomes for most student questionnaire items related to engagement, for which 2018 values were lower than those recorded during baseline measurements in 2013. In comparison to other DLSC sites, Pittsfield's student engagement values for many items remain relatively low.

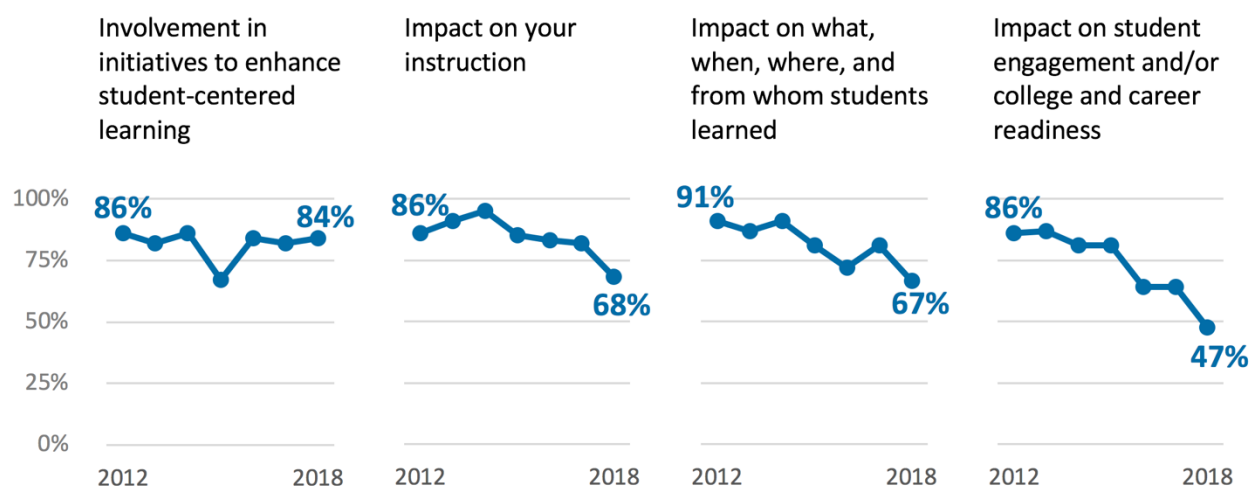
Updated Findings

Outcomes from the teacher questionnaire about teachers' involvement with district initiatives to enhance student-centered learning were relatively consistent with previous years, in which over 80 percent of teachers usually reported "moderate" or "substantial" levels of involvement (see Figure 22). Not surprisingly, correlation analyses found that teachers who reported higher levels of involvement with DLSC also reported higher levels of preparedness to lead instruction that required personalization, critical thinking/problem solving, collaboration, and anytime/anywhere learning. There were also positive, statistically significant correlations of a moderate magnitude between teachers' involvement and the extent to which teachers incorporated personalization and self-regulation/academic tenacity into classroom instruction.

Teachers' perceptions of the impact of DLSC declined in the final year of data collection. The percentage of teachers who reported a "moderate" or "substantial" impact on their instruction, student learning experiences, and student engagement decreased by about 15 percentage points for each item. In general, these values have trended downwards since the start of the initiative.

Figure 22. Teachers' level of involvement with and perceived impact of student-centered learning initiatives during the past year

Teacher Questionnaire: % of teachers who responded with “moderate” or “substantial” on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = none, 2 = minimal, 3 = moderate, 4 = substantial

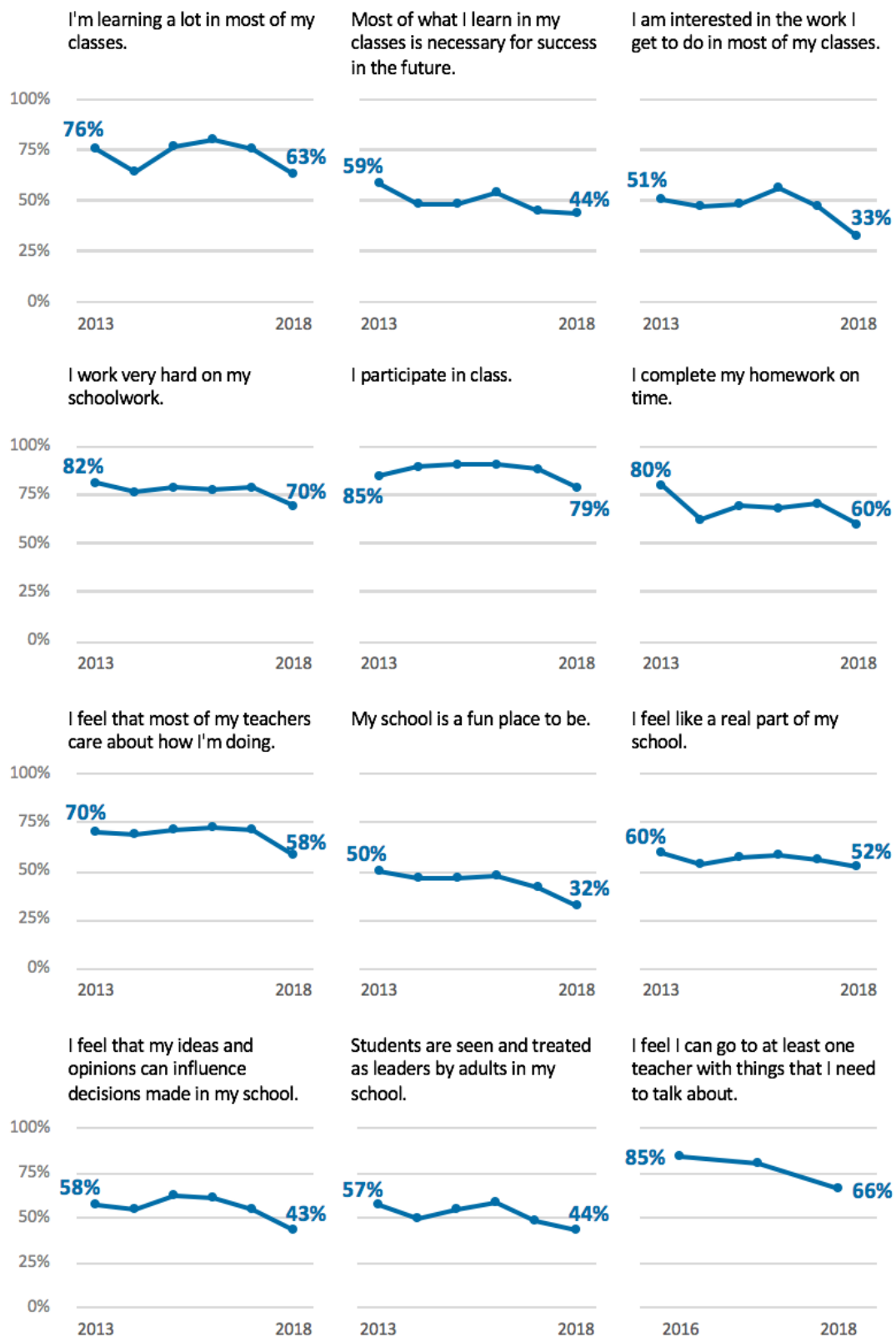


Overall, findings from the student questionnaire reinforce teachers' impression that student engagement has declined—both within the past year and during DLSC. For all student engagement items, the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with each statement was lower in 2018 than in 2017, and lower than 2013 baseline measurements. In comparison to other DLSC sites, Pittsfield's values for student engagement were often among the lowest. Particularly large gaps remain between Pittsfield and other sites for the items, “I am interested in the work I get to do in most of my classes”, “I believe I can increase my intelligence through hard work and effort in school,” “I feel that most of my teachers care about how I'm doing”, and “I have a clear idea of what I will do after I graduate from high school.”

Correlations between student engagement items and other questionnaire items pointed to a moderate association between student use of technology to support SCL and student engagement. In particular, there was a pattern of positive, statistically significant correlations between engagement and the extent to which students reported using technology to support their learning “anytime/anywhere,” collaborate with classmates on assignments, and pursue topics of interest. While these findings seem to suggest an association between SCL-aligned use of technology and student engagement, correlation analysis does not indicate the direction of the relationship. For example, it is also possible that students who are motivated to engage with coursework and extracurriculars may be similarly motivated to take advantage of educational technology resources.

Figure 24. How much do you agree with the following?

Student questionnaire: % of students who agree or strongly agree on a scale of 1-4, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree



Long-term Outcomes

Data on long-term outcomes theorized to be aligned with SCL were mixed. The percentage of students scoring proficient or higher on the math portion of the SAT increased by 20 percentage points during the past two years, and the gap between Pittsfield's proficiency rate and the statewide rate has narrowed. In contrast, proficiency rates for ELA remained fairly constant.

The dropout rate increased slightly last year, while the graduation rate remained the same. Both figures are similar to those reported five years ago in the 2013-14 school year.

Data on post-secondary plans of high school graduates point to a positive trend, with more students enrolling in four-year colleges and fewer joining the workforce immediately after graduation. Specifically, enrollment in four-year colleges increased by about ten percentage points between the class of 2016 and class of 2018, with a proportional decrease in the percentage of students who reported entering the workforce. While this is a promising shift that aligns with NMEF's goal of improving college readiness via SCL, caution should be used in drawing a causal relationship, particularly due to the small sample size.

Table 5. Pittsfield Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate

	Graduation Rate 2013–14	Graduation Rate 2014–15	Graduation Rate 2015-16	Graduation Rate 2016-17	Graduation Rate 2017-18
Pittsfield High School	72%	71%	57.5%	73%	73%
State-Wide	89%	88%	88%	89%	89%

Note. Source: State of New Hampshire Department of Education Website
<http://education.nh.gov/data/dropouts.htm>

Table 6. Pittsfield High School Dropout Rate

	Annual Dropout Rate 2013–14	Annual Dropout Rate 2014–15	Annual Dropout Rate 2015-16	Annual Dropout Rate 2016-17	Annual Dropout Rate 2017-18
Pittsfield High School	3%	4%	2.5%	.6%	3%
State-Wide	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

Note. Source: State of New Hampshire Department of Education Website
<http://education.nh.gov/data/dropouts.htm>

Table 7: ELA, % of grade 11 students scoring proficient or above, as measured by the SAT

	2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
	Pittsfield High School (N=19)	State-Wide	Pittsfield High School (N=26)	State-Wide	Pittsfield High School (N=25-30)	State-Wide
All Students	53%	66%	56%	65%	52%	65%
Gender						
Male	**	63%	63%	62%	57%	62%
Female	55%	69%	50%	68%	45%	69%
Race/Ethnicity						
White	56%	68%	59%	66%	48%	67%
Family Income						
Not Economically Disadvantaged	54%	Not available***	70%	Not available***	Not available***	Not available***
Economically Disadvantaged	**	44%	**	42%	Not available***	43%

Note. Source: State of New Hampshire Department of Education Website

<https://www.education.nh.gov/iportal/index.htm>

** Data not provided because sample size is fewer than 11 students

*** Data not provided at state level

Table 8: Math, % of grade 11 students scoring proficient or above, as measured by the SAT

	2015-2016		2016-2017		2017-2018	
	Pittsfield High School (N=19)	State-Wide	Pittsfield High School (N=26)	State-Wide	Pittsfield High School (N=25-30)	State-Wide
All Students	16%	40%	20%	43%	36%	41%
Gender						
Male	**	42%	27%	44%	43%	43%
Female	9%	38%	14%	41%	27%	39%
Race/Ethnicity						
White	17%	42%	21%	44%	35%	42%
Family Income						
Not Economically Disadvantaged	23%	Not available***	25%	Not available***	Not available***	Not available***
Economically Disadvantaged	**	20%	**	21%	Not available***	19%

Note. Source: State of New Hampshire Department of Education Website

<https://www.education.nh.gov/iportal/index.htm>

** Data not provided because sample size is fewer than 11 students

*** Data not provided at state level

Table 9. 2012-2018 Average Daily Attendance Rate

	Average Daily Attendance 2012–2013	Average Daily Attendance 2013–2014	Average Daily Attendance 2014–2015	Average Daily Attendance 2015–2016	Average Daily Attendance 2016–2017	Average Daily Attendance 2017–2018
Pittsfield High School	90%	87%	87%	89%	90%	88%
State	94%	93.5%	93.5%	95%	94%	93%

Note. Source: State of New Hampshire Department of Education Website
<http://education.nh.gov/data/attendance.htm>

Table 10. Plans of High School Completers

	Class of 2016		Class of 2017		Class of 2018	
	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield	State	Pittsfield	State
4-Year College	16%	50%	19%	50%	26%	52%
Less than 4-year College	29%	23%	22%	22%	26%	20%
Work	52%	17%	48%	18%	43%	18%
Military	3%	3%	11%	3%	6%	3%
Unemployed	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Unknown	0%	6%	0%	6%	0%	5%

Note. Source: State of New Hampshire Department of Education Website
<http://education.nh.gov/data/dropouts.htm>

Conclusions

Several years of data collection on SCL related activities in Pittsfield were considered when assessing site progress towards DLSC goals. Key conclusions are detailed here, which highlight important lessons and considerations for the site, and may provide guidance to the field as more districts invest in SCL related policies and teaching environments.

PBL engrained, but significant questions remain unresolved. During DLSC, Pittsfield has made great strides in developing and implementing a schoolwide (and now districtwide) system of competency-based grading and assessment. While some of this change was likely spurred by the state's shift towards PBL, staff have shared the impression that Pittsfield is further along in its implementation of PBL than other New Hampshire districts, which is likely due to Pittsfield's participation in DLSC and bold actions taken at the beginning of the initiative to institute competency-based systems. Now, at the end of the initiative, Pittsfield identifies as a fully competency-based school, with plans to continue using PBL post-DLSC. As discussed in current and previous evaluation reports, teachers have come to value several aspects of PBL. It allows for greater flexibility in assessment options, encourages clear articulation of course learning goals, and details for students the level of knowledge or skill associated with each competency grade. Staff also appreciate that PBL holds students accountable for each area of the curriculum, thereby eliminating the possibility of students' passing a course without sufficient understanding of all core topics.

Despite Pittsfield's commitment to, and multiple years of experience with PBL, the new system of grading and assessment has raised difficult questions throughout the evaluation which belie the complexity of adopting a proficiency-based system. Staff are still working towards a shared understanding and application of competency-based standards and grading, suggesting that a stable PBL system may require several years of sustained attention and adjustment. In recent years, concerns have emerged about how to design a PBL system that is equitable for all, including students with disabilities and those who struggle to progress towards graduation after failure to meet one or more competencies. Throughout the initiative, Pittsfield has also grappled with the practical implications of PBL's theory that students should move through the curriculum at their own pace, with multiple opportunities to demonstrate competency or revise work. While some teachers have advocated for mastery of content and skills over punctuality, others worry that such flexibility does not adequately prepare students for future careers or post-secondary education, which typically require strong time and project management skills. Similarly, competency-based grading in Pittsfield has left some teachers uncertain how to structure their courses around students who make progress at different rates.

Pittsfield has been attentive and responsive to challenges as they have been identified. New strategies have been introduced to attend to these concerns (e.g., advisor support for students completing competency-recovery plans, interventions focused on work-study habits and executive function skills), and leadership acknowledge that there is still work to be done to fully address the complexity inherent in PBL. Similar types of predicaments have emerged (and are likely to continue to emerge) in other DLSC sites that have incorporated PBL, suggesting that systems change efforts should be accompanied by an awareness of the potential for wicked

problems to arise and a willingness to adapt to changing conditions, such as through the use of continuous improvement strategies.

Time for staff collaboration as a necessary, but possibly insufficient condition for building a shared instructional vision and common practices. DLSC hypothesized that, by expanding opportunities for staff collaboration, teachers would be more likely to coalesce around a shared vision of learning, instruction, assessment, and day-to-day teaching practice. In Pittsfield, new structures were implemented during DLSC to promote faculty collaboration, and trend data from the teacher questionnaire has increased for several measures of collaborative culture. Yet data from multiple sources suggests that a substantial amount of variation still exists in teachers' views of effective instruction and assessment, along with daily classroom practices. For example, values associated with questionnaire items asking teachers about the extent to which they have similar ideas about how students learn, how student work should be assessed, and how to provide effective instruction have either declined or remained unchanged during DLSC. At the same time, teachers have reported an increase in jointly reviewing student work, sharing teaching strategies with each other, asking colleagues for assistance, and observing other classrooms. A similar pattern appears in the evaluation's qualitative data. We have observed collaborative, interactive professional development sessions and CPT meetings, in addition to hearing from teachers about the extent to which they value these occasions to work together. At the same time, staff have regularly shared examples of differences among the faculty regarding pedagogical philosophy, assessment methods, and instructional approaches.

Pittsfield's experience suggests that an increase in staff collaboration may not be sufficient to unite teachers around a shared vision of instruction and assessment. Other factors, such as the content and nature of collaborative meetings, or the extent to which expectations for teachers are supported, may be equally important. During the most recent site visit, some teachers stressed the importance of spending more time discussing the complicated issues associated with PBL and SCL, with the hope that extended deliberation could lead to consensus. Further support for consistent implementation through regular feedback, coaching, or policy guidance could also lead to greater consistency in the way teachers think about and practice student-centered learning.

Declining trends in student engagement. DLSC was also predicated on the hypothesis that opportunities for student-centered learning and ownership would lead to an increase in student engagement and, ultimately, college and career readiness. In Pittsfield, however, rates of student engagement decreased over the course of the initiative, contradicting anticipated outcomes. These trends in measures of student engagement raise questions about other aspects of the learning environment that may be essential for SCL to succeed in raising student engagement for all learners.

Stakeholders in Pittsfield have noted that SCL places higher demands on students than what might be experienced in more traditional academic settings. Students are often expected to identify topics of interest to focus on, along with methods they plan to employ to demonstrate their learning. The shift from daily homework and regular tests to long-term projects requires the ability to manage both one's time and multi-step projects. Further, students must learn to navigate among elective options to personalize their education, such as ELOs, online courses,

and dual enrollment. In Pittsfield, some students have readily taken advantage of these new opportunities available to them under the shift to SCL. During interviews, student focus groups, and site visits, we have heard about students who customize ELOs to their career interests, demonstrate competency through self-proposed methods, initiate new Learning Studios, and consult with their advisor about post-secondary plans. Simultaneously, however, staff have explained that many students struggle with the open-ended, flexible nature of SCL, both in terms of coursework and charting a customized path to graduation. Teachers have mentioned that some students still prefer to receive step-by-step instructions for assignments, instead of independently determining how to produce a final product. Similarly, others have noted a tendency for students to interpret the option to revise and resubmit work as a way to delay substantial investment of time and effort. Some students have also struggled to make progress in less structured learning experiences, such as ELOs and competency recovery plans.

Overall, findings from the duration of the evaluation suggest that, while a subset of students have embraced the personalized, self-directed opportunities available in an SCL learning environment, many others have been challenged by the expectation to assume ownership over their learning. It should be noted that this finding has also been echoed as a concern for teachers and administrators in other DLSC sites. As Pittsfield is aware, such students likely require high levels of individual support, alongside systems to strengthen students' executive function skills. These types of supports are evident at Pittsfield in programs such as advisory, RENEW, and a freshman seminar focused on work-study habits. Despite the presence of these programs, implementing them as intended can be difficult in a small school with limited resources such as Pittsfield. With inadequate funds and few staff who are solely dedicated to such initiatives, schools such as Pittsfield may face constraints in providing students with the level of support necessary to succeed under student-centered learning. While Pittsfield remains committed to SCL, teachers and administrators will likely need to continue to consider how to balance effectiveness and efficiency in helping all students take charge of their education. As one staff member said, "I think student-centered is not something that's going away....our goal is student-centered learning....It's just a matter of trying to get there with minimal resources."