

I. Classroom Based Competencies

A. Thinking and Discerning in Complex Ways

The first competency is thinking and discerning in complex ways. We want students to move beyond formulaic responses to a given problem by pushing them to think critically, to draw from a deep and diverse pool of knowledge and resources, to skillfully evaluate the validity and applicability of that information, make creative and authentic connections, and ultimately arrive at either a thoughtful and cohesive solution or a better question. This will require students to break down the barriers between content areas and draw from their entire knowledge pool. Inherent in this competency is the ability to add to their knowledge from a wide array of information resources, evaluating both the content of the information and the point of view of the source.

B. Creating Original Ideas and Results

The second competency is creating original ideas and results. The process of producing and inventing is one of synthesis. It asks that the student treat his and her knowledge as a raw material and that they build something new with it. This being a risky enterprise, students must be encouraged not to fear being “wrong.” This competency has tangible results; there is something new in the world put there by the student. However, it is the process that is essential in defining what is “original.” While experimenting with an art technique, literary style, or the like, a student may make something that echoes what has been done before, yet is original because it had its source in the student.

C. Effective Communication

The third competency is communicating effectively. Skills in this area fall into two main branches. First, students need to become skillful at listening to and understanding others. They need to ask themselves what they need to hear, who they need to hear from, and how they can show that they have heard and understood. Second, students need to become skilled persuaders. To achieve this, students must be able to clearly identify what they want to say, who they are going to say it to, and how, therefore, they can construct the most convincing argument possible through the effective

design of their message and medium. Students will need these skills both in the context of their own personal work and growth and in the context of contributing to a larger group; these skills extend not only to traditional scholastic media of the spoken and written word, but also to artistic and technological media such as images, video, and many others.

D. Information Age Fluency

The fourth competency is demonstrating the ability to use “digital technology, communications tools, and/or networks to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, sift, sort, and create information in order to thrive in a knowledge-based society.” Engage 21st century skills: Literacy in the Digital Age, from <http://www.ncrel.org>) While this competency acknowledges the overriding importance of basic literacy in English and proficiency in numeracy, its focus is building onto those baseline skills scientific, economic, technological, visual, and information literacy.

II. Community Based Competencies

A. Cultural Competence and Global Awareness

The fifth competency is cultural and global awareness. As global citizens, our students should be eager to learn about the world around them and the people that fill it. They should understand the role that place, culture, religion, and language play in how different people communicate with each other and perceive the world. They should be afforded the opportunity to broaden their range of experiences, to increase their exposure to different ideas, and to empathize with different perspectives and viewpoints. This competency spans both the local and the global, both foreign lands and cross-town neighborhoods.

B. Civic Engagement

The sixth competency is civic engagement. This requires awareness, dialogue, and action in the social and political world. We want students to be informed about local and global issues affecting our human population, to participate in politics, and to mobilize to serve real needs in their communities. In linking action with awareness and reflection, we hope to condition students to make choices that reinforce a sense of being part of something bigger than them, and to realize that an individual can have an impact on a community, and that committed individuals working together can effect colossal change.

C. Environmental Engagement: Sustainability and Stewardship

The seventh competency is environmental engagement. Environmental awareness is not enough; we want students to look at all the ways humans and the environment interacts and actually changes their behaviors so that their interactions are future-looking and responsible. In becoming active stewards of the environment, we want them to influence and change the institutions that surround them, as well. This will result in a true environmental engagement reflected in sustainability and stewardship.

III. Individual-Based Competencies

A. Personal Resiliency and Strength of Character

The eighth competency encompasses personal resiliency and strength of character. Strength of character refers to the ability to make sound, ethical decisions in personal, professional, and societal contexts. It includes a healthy perspective on the student's place in the family, school, and other communities of which they are a part. This engenders resiliency, the ability to recover from the major and minor shocks that shake us and our understanding of the world around us. Resiliency is learned in part by being allowed to take risks, and even fail, within the context of the supportive school community. It is also aided by an understanding of when, in what ways, and from whom to seek help when it becomes important to do so.

B. Adaptability

The ninth competency is the ability to adapt in a complex world. Students must be able to change course, learn new skills, and redefine themselves in the face of rapid change. They must also manage their world's complexity by managing time and organizing and integrating resources.