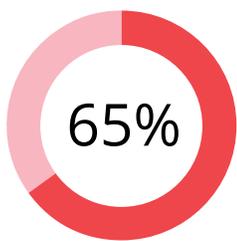# THE *Canopy*

The Canopy project shares information about schools engaged in innovation to advance equity and student-centered learning. Every year, schools nominated to the project share the practices they're implementing in a survey. With this information, we used a statistical process to cluster practices that tend to show up in schools' data together—in other words, a bottom-up approach that helps reveal themes among schools' practices. We found four distinct themes.
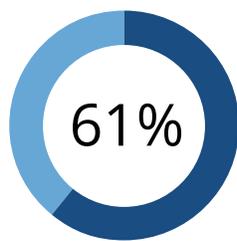
THEME 3: DEEPER LEARNING FOR MASTERY

In schools implementing these kinds of practices, students show their skills and knowledge through performance assessments rather than traditional tests. Instead of earning credit for learning by finishing a time-based course and getting a passing grade, they earn credit by showing they've mastered specific skills or content areas. They're expected to demonstrate or defend their learning through portfolios and presentations of learning, and they're evaluated on measures of success that go beyond traditional academic test scores, such as assessments designed to capture evidence of deeper learning. They may learn in multi-age groups of students, organized by interest or skill, rather than always being grouped in age-graded classrooms. Their schools may also invest in student leadership skills through structures like advisory groups or student-led conferences.

PERCENTAGE OF 251 CANOPY SCHOOLS THAT REPORTED KEY PRACTICES IN THIS THEME

65%	61%	47%	42%	35%
Interdisciplinary	Competency/mastery-based education	Multi-age classrooms	Design thinking process	Makerspace
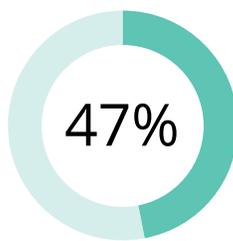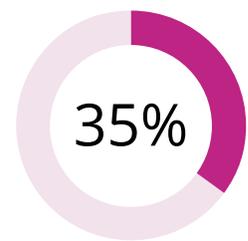
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EXAMPLES IN ACTION: DEEPER LEARNING FOR MASTERY

Clark Street Community School is a public charter high school in Middleton, Wisconsin, and its *"fully implemented mastery-based learning system and [use of] that transcript as the official summative record for graduates"* led to its nomination to Canopy. The school leader attributes their academic results to their intentional school climate-building work and switch to a competency model, saying, *"We knew that grades worked against learning… If we were still assigning grades…there's no way we would have the results we have."* Instead of traditional assessments, Clark Street students lead their own conferences twice a year to share updates on their journey with their advisors and families, and they give public presentations of their learning twice a year.

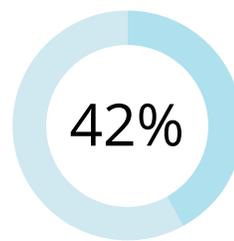Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District highlights Clark Street Community School's role in their innovation efforts for students. Credit: Dea Kruger

Brian Hyoska, Head of School at Embark Education in Denver, Colorado presented on how *"unscheduled time on the calendar - called 'white space' - is a core design principle… trusting students to structure their own time creates room for conversations about their choices, giving them freedom with responsibility."*

Celeste Ferguson, School Leader at Fugees Academy, observed that, *"So often adults feel constrained by what they think is supposed to be happening and that intentional or unintentional messaging passes along to students…[like] the expectation that all students must perform at a certain grade level based on their age."*

Fugees Academy students in soccer uniforms line up for a team photo.

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