



May 1, 2018



Dear [REDACTED],

The educational needs of our students are constantly evolving. In order to meet those needs, Brooks has begun to transition to a competency-based teaching and learning system. This model focuses on real-world skills and is the foundation for college and life readiness. To successfully transition to a competency-based education model as a school, we need to provide continued learning and professional development opportunities to our teachers. Some training in CBE has begun already. This summer, competency-based education was the subject that five Brooks educators explored through professional development opportunities. This is a positive sign, however, more of our 64 teaching faculty need to receive in-depth training or education in CBE methods. Another opportunity for our teachers is the Mastery Transcript Consortium, which Director of Teaching and Learning Mary-Jo Carabatsos, and Associate Head for Academic Affairs Lance Latham, attended for the second summer. This peer learning opportunity focuses on creating a transcript that emphasizes "...performance areas (rather than academic departments), mastery standards and micro-credits (rather than grades)." The objective of the consortium fully aligns with the conversation around skills and competency grading, which Brooks School is already having as a result of our shift to CBE. One potential outcome of the consortium is the development of a new assessment database.

"Since our school is heading in that direction with our curriculum and assessment, [professional development this summer] offered us a chance to hear from leading experts from around the country and to begin to position us to roll out competency-based education here at Brooks over the course of the next few years," says Dean of Faculty John McVeigh. "It is important for our teachers to receive training and professional development opportunities." We still have work to do to ensure all teachers have access to these invaluable opportunities. In order to explore CBE and expose more teachers to best practices in CBE, we need to secure funding to underwrite learning opportunities including short-term workshops, as well as sabbaticals and summer opportunities for longer term in-depth learning.



The need for more professional development is a major focus for Brooks School, and one of the reasons we have made the endowment for faculty support a cornerstone of our current capital campaign. Funds available for use will help us cover the costs related to professional development including but not be limited to registration and attendance fees for workshops and conferences as well as necessary materials and books. In return, our teachers will apply the principles of CBE to their curricula, they will define the competencies, skills, and habits we expect our students to master and will modify student evaluations so that they provide evidence that students have practiced, learned, and mastered those skills throughout their Brooks School career.

A gift of \$100,000 for Faculty Education and Support will establish a professional development fund for our teachers. Income from the Endowment for Faculty Education & Support will help us cultivate a community of teachers who are life-long learners, which we know benefits our community in myriad ways. In particular, professional development has become crucial to our ability to transition the school to a Competency-Based Education (CBE) model, which we believe will better prepare our students with the mastery of skills they need to succeed in college, their careers, and life beyond Brooks.

When we reach our goal of adding \$2 million to the endowment for faculty support, we will add nearly \$100,000 annually to support continued learning for our deserving teachers, which in turn will create a richer education experience for the students who call this school home.

WHY BROOKS?

Ultimately, applying CBE to the way we teach and assess our students will help the school produce graduates who are productive, thoughtful, well-rounded citizens with the skills and knowledge to really make a difference in the world in which they will live and work. What they learn now will have a long-term effect on how they approach problem-solving, communications and their contributions to their communities in college, their careers, and well into adulthood.

The close-knit nature of Brooks School, and small class sizes coupled with the multi-dimensional roles our faculty play in students' lives as teachers, advisors, coaches, dorm parents, and mentors--makes our school uniquely prepared to implement CBE. Our faculty are constantly learning and shifting in order to deliver the highest caliber educational program. Our faculty seeks out new opportunities to learn and share their skills. This happens casually through day-to-day interactions with their peers at Brooks and nearby peer schools. Our teachers also undertake in-depth learning opportunities which run anywhere from one day to several years depending on the topic. During the summer of 2017, 27 faculty members partook



in over 20 different programs. But only a few of them had the opportunity to take a deep dive into CBE. We as a school are eager to provide those opportunities through professional development funds.

Brooks School takes great pride in the fact that we are a school with happy and engaged kids, caring adults attuned to the needs of students, and an approach rooted in the belief that we can always be better. This aspirational approach requires the school community to continually reflect on instructional practices, how well we know our students, and strive to do better. Examining current grading trends, instruction, and assessment, there are inconsistencies in the Brooks School program as students move from classroom to classroom and teacher to teacher. The autonomy of the independent classroom lends itself to this type of experience. Clearly defined competencies will ensure that students master the skills required for future success. Students will learn by doing and this leads to a more engaged student body and an opportunity to know our students better and help each student gain a better sense of their strengths and weaknesses.

Knowing our students well is essential to delivering a Brooks School experience and CBE allows us to more fully know our students and ensure progress in key discipline areas and life skills. Students will have more information to set personal goals in areas they would like to improve, knowing there is a baseline competency to be met to earn the Brooks diploma. Faculty can more fully evaluate student learning in all areas of school life because the rubrics for success skills can be used in classrooms, dorms, and afternoon activities.

POPULATION SERVED

At the core of competency education is the intent that each of our 378 students receives timely, differentiated support based on their individual needs and that each of our 64 teaching faculty members is trained to properly assess the education of each student. We need to establish the school-wide competencies that are core to our mission and student expectations around these competencies. In order to evaluate these competencies, we need to better assess and know our students in all areas of school life. As a school, we know this to be true and value the relationships that grow in all areas of school life in and out of the classroom. As a boarding school, we have a unique opportunity to leverage this time to help students engage or re-engage in their own learning.

PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION



As the school begins to shift, starting in the fall and winter of 2017, to a Competency-Based Education system to assess our success in teaching students the skills they need to thrive beyond Brooks, all of our teaching faculty and academic administrators will need to be trained in best practices. This is a significant shift in teaching philosophy. CBE is being rolled out incrementally, and therefore training can happen incrementally as well.

Throughout our initial roll-out of the program in FY18, and into FY19, we will be following the projected timeline (below) to ensure as smooth as possible a transition to CBE. As you can see, continued professional development is the cornerstone to our success in transitioning to CBE, and ultimately serving our students as best we can.

2017-2018 MILESTONE PLANNING

- Create Brooks Success Skills rubric and metrics
- All faculty use the Success skills rubric in Winter Term classes
- Pilot implementation of Success Skills rubric in dorms
- Pilot Competency Based education practices in ninth-grade classrooms across academic disciplines. This will require some preliminary agreement on core competencies or preliminary competencies for all departments participating in the pilot. (The pilot competencies do not necessarily represent the final department competencies. Pilot competencies have been established as of Winter Term 2018 and will be evaluated by a committee following the end of the term. Final competency development and adoption is a multi-year, collaborative endeavor for all departments in Year 2. (physics, history, math, language)
- Professional development opportunities for faculty to begin using and developing competencies, and training in other models of instruction. For example, teaching students what good collaboration looks like in a Brooks School classroom
- One competency-based assessment before the end of the 2017-2018 school year for each faculty member
- Explore schedule restrictions and nuances to create “time” for flexible meeting opportunities for teacher working groups. This is critical to the further expansion of CBE moving forward.
- Day-long training in CBE using outside speakers and in-house facilitators. (June faculty meetings)



-Ongoing feedback from students and teachers on how things are going.

2018-2019 MILESTONE PLANNING

-A Third Form team that will use competencies in all of the “introductory level classes.” This team will have required team time to plan, assess student work, and build a cohesive working group. This is a good place to start since the third form class represents the smallest number of students and creating planning time for all teachers may be easier.

-Pilot Competency Based education practices in the second level/course classrooms across academic disciplines. Discipline-specific competencies should be in place and will provide a framework for more teachers to use competencies with a final competency determination completed by the end of year 2.

-A second competency-based assessment is developed by each faculty member not actively involved in the third form team or second-year pilot.

-Brooks School Success Skills evaluated in all classes.

-Ongoing professional development

GRANT TERM

The grant will be invested in the Brooks School endowment, which the Investment Committee of the Board of Trustees oversees. At present, the annual draw on income available from the endowment is 4.75 percent. The fund will live in perpetuity and provide a stable long-term source of funding for faculty support, especially important as we transition to CBE.

MEASURING IMPACT AND SUCCESS

As we are currently taking our first steps in apply CBE to our curricula, the Competency-Based Education (CBE) committee has narrowed the initial list of essential competencies to include three core skill competencies: Effective Communication, Managing One’s Learning and Contributing to One’s Community in a Collaborative Manner. The CBE committee will ask for feedback and use this information to inform our final goals for professional development and to plan for future implementation of competencies and assessment.



Once the final competencies and skills are defined, faculty will need to provide evidence that students have practiced, learned, and mastered the skills, content, and habits throughout their Brooks School career. These competencies need to include Success Skills, formerly called 21st Century skills, and content specific skills that are assessed by “doing” through performance assessments created in a collaborative manner and allow a demonstrated transfer of skills to novel situations.

Competencies will allow teachers to assess each individual student, provide a framework for improvement, and more fully describe the level of mastery a student has attained along with a continuum. This provides a more individualized assessment of students and allows the student to take more ownership of his/her/their learning.