



CompetencyWorks

Communication Strategies for Education Leaders Shifting Toward Competency-Based, Personalized Learning

April 3, 2018 1-2pm EDT

Chris Sturgis, CompetencyWorks
Karla Esparza-Phillips, [ExcelinEd](#)



Five Elements of a Competency Education



Students advance upon demonstrated mastery



Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.



Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.



Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.



Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions



Personalized Learning Message Testing

Karla Phillips

Policy Director, Personalized Learning

April 2018



1. Deliberate shift in terminology; from competency-based education toward the broader, more encompassing term “personalized learning.”
2. Significant increase in interest and implementation at both the state and local level. From these pioneers, we are learning key lessons.
3. The biggest takeaway has been the critical role of strategic communication and outreach strategies.

What is this new program I heard about?



What is your elevator pitch?



- These trends prompted ExcelinEd to conduct a digital landscape analysis and message testing to explore how to most effectively communicate with stakeholders.
- The national message testing survey included 800 registered voters. The questions asked were carefully constructed from lessons learned through research, understanding of emerging trends and the digital landscape report.
- The message testing results revealed that there are important nuances in both describing personalized learning as well as making the case for it.



- *Competency-based education* is a niche topic.
 - It has been closely associated with discussion of education reform conferences on Twitter as well as micro-credentials and digital badges in a higher education context.
- *Personalized learning* is more widely used on social media than competency-based education and related terms (proficiency or mastery-based).



- Mastery indicates a deeper level of understanding than competency.
- Mastery signals that a student is ready to learn more advanced material, while competency leaves room for doubt.

What's In a Name? Personalized Learning



- Almost half say they have heard the phrase *personalized learning*.
 - But there are **significant race and education gaps**. 68% of Hispanic voters said no and likewise 59% of voters with only a high school diploma said no.
- The term personalized learning communicates the message well on its own and appears to be intuitive.

“Education catered to individual students focused on their strengths and interests.” - 47 year old man

“Learning methods that are adjusted to best meet the needs of each student.” - 59 year old woman.

- Personalized learning is generally well-received but not well-known.

Testing, Testing 1-2-3



Where students advance to higher levels of learning when they personally demonstrate mastery of concepts and skills, regardless of time, place, or pace. It moves us beyond our current system of grades and credits to one where students must show they have mastered a skill or body of knowledge before moving on to the next concept or skill.

Having just read this description, do you think this generally sounds like a good idea or a bad idea?

Very Good Idea
35%

Good Idea
45%

Discussion

MESSAGE TESTING



The Key Messages??

THE QUESTION:

You will now see a series of statements describing the benefits of “personalized learning” and how it works. For each of the following, please tell me if you think the statement makes you more or less interested in the schools in your area implementing personalized learning.”

- Much more interested?
- Somewhat more interested?
- Neither more nor less
- Somewhat less interested?
- Much less interested

Additionally, please choose any words or phrases that stick out to you as particularly important to why the statement makes you more or less interested.



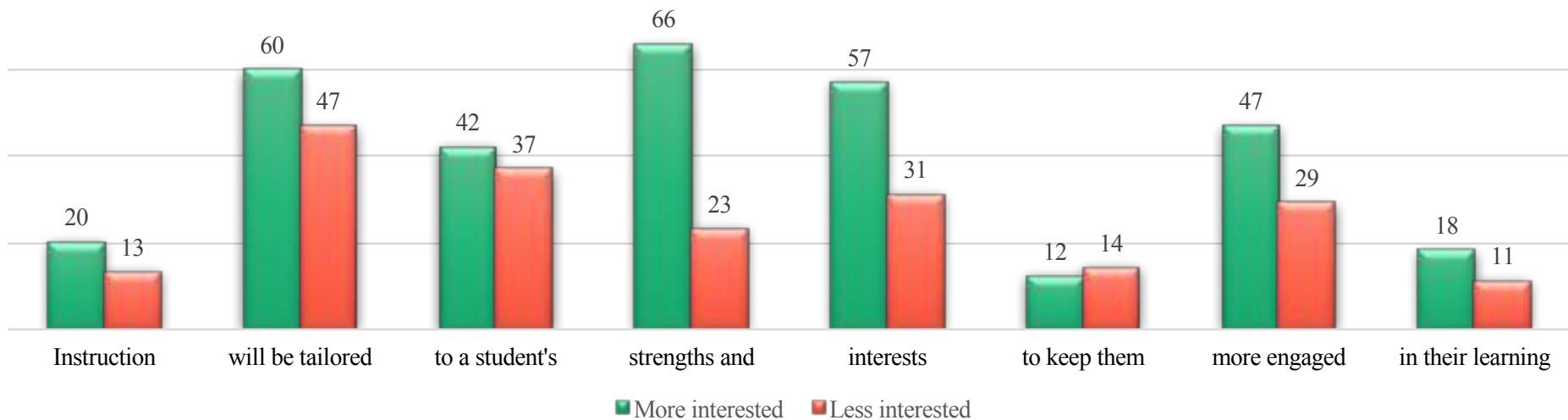
- Voters were able to choose more than one word, yet in most questions there were clearly words that sparked interest.
- Notice that many times the same word or phrases caught the attention of both voters more and less interested.
- Based on the responses to the open-ended questions, it may be that some words prompted voters to become less interested because the words prompted even more questions for them or their difficulty understanding how it would work.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



After hearing the statement below, voters were
76% more interested, 42% much more.

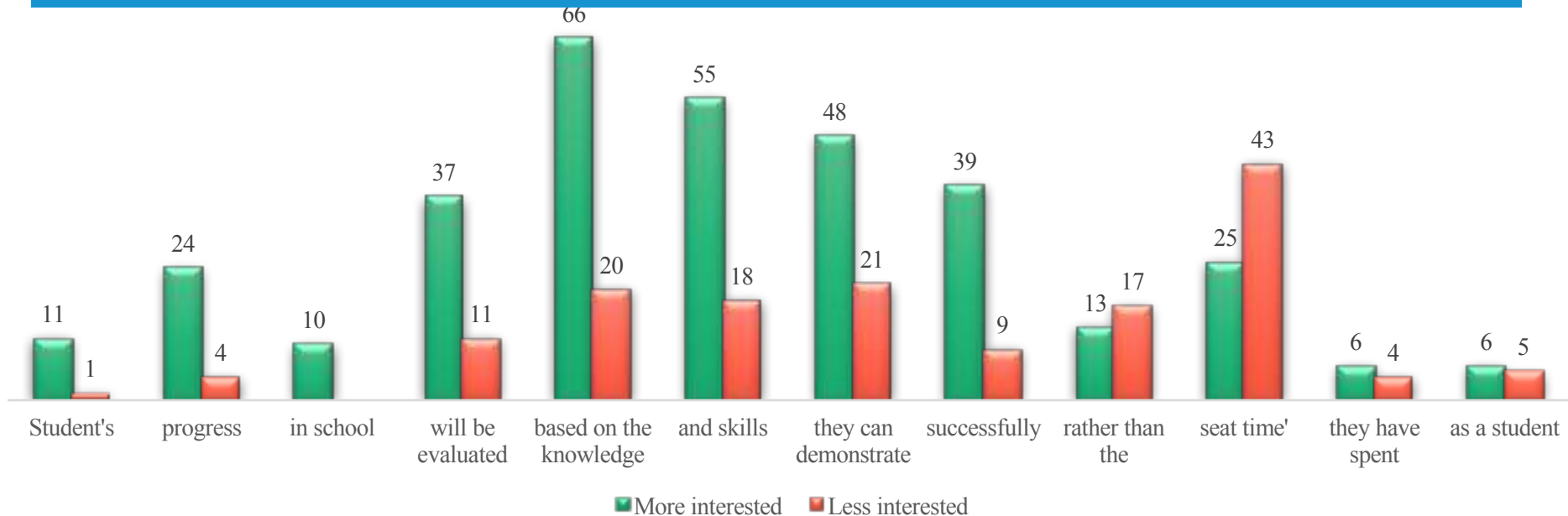
Instruction will be tailored to a student's strengths and interests to keep them more engaged in their learning.





After hearing the statement below, voters were **73% more interested, 41% much more.**

Students' progress in school will be evaluated based on knowledge and skills they can demonstrate successfully rather than the 'seat time' they have spent as a student.

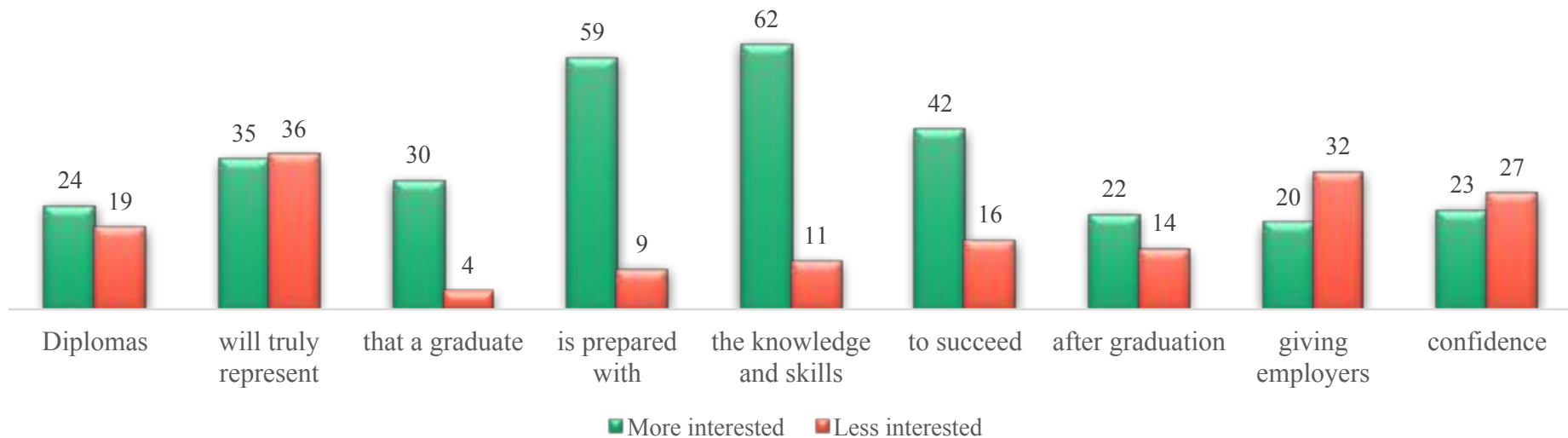


MEANINGFUL DIPLOMAS



After hearing the statement below, voters were **73% more interested, 40% much more.**

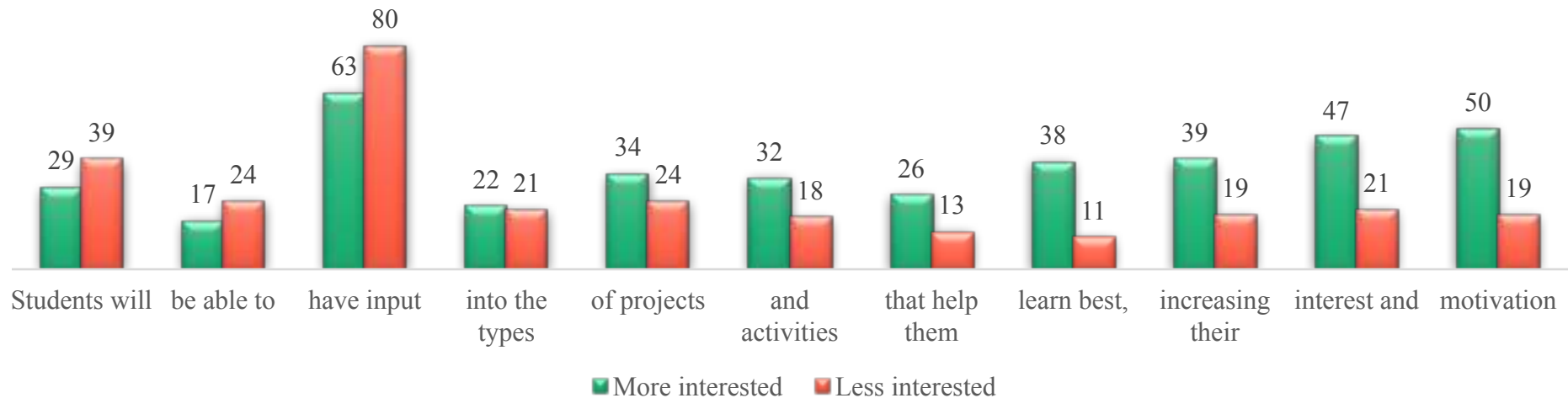
Diplomas will truly represent that a graduate is prepared with the knowledge and skills to succeed after graduation, giving employers confidence.





After hearing the statement below, voters were
73% more interested, 39% much more.

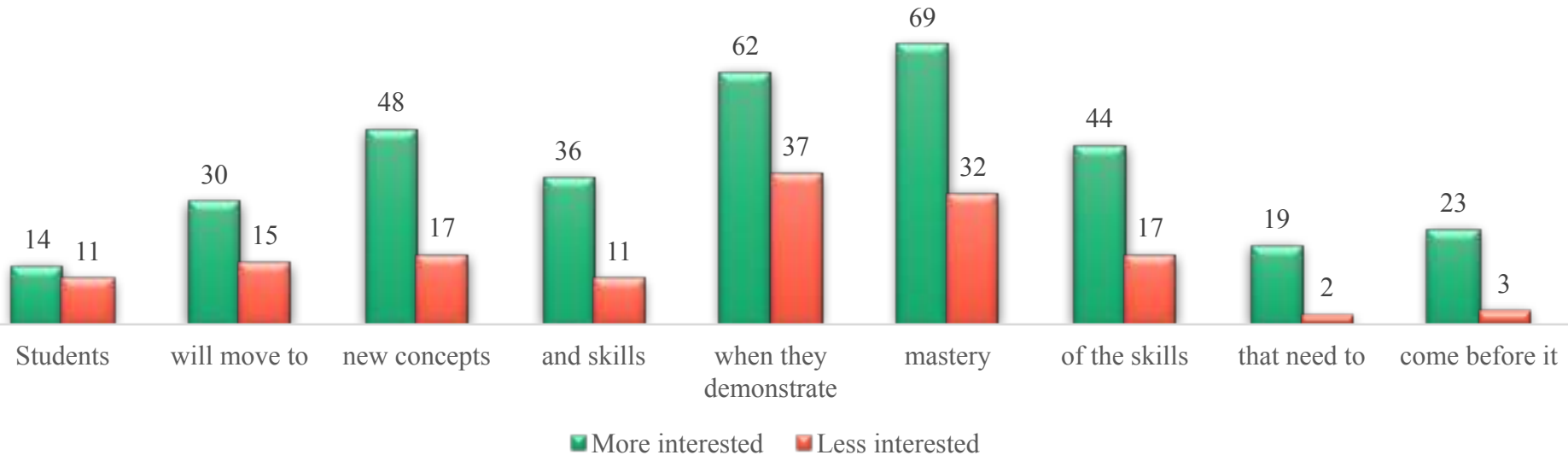
Students will be able to have input into the types of projects and activities that help them learn best increasing their interest and motivation.





After hearing the statement below, voters were
75% more interested, 38% much more.

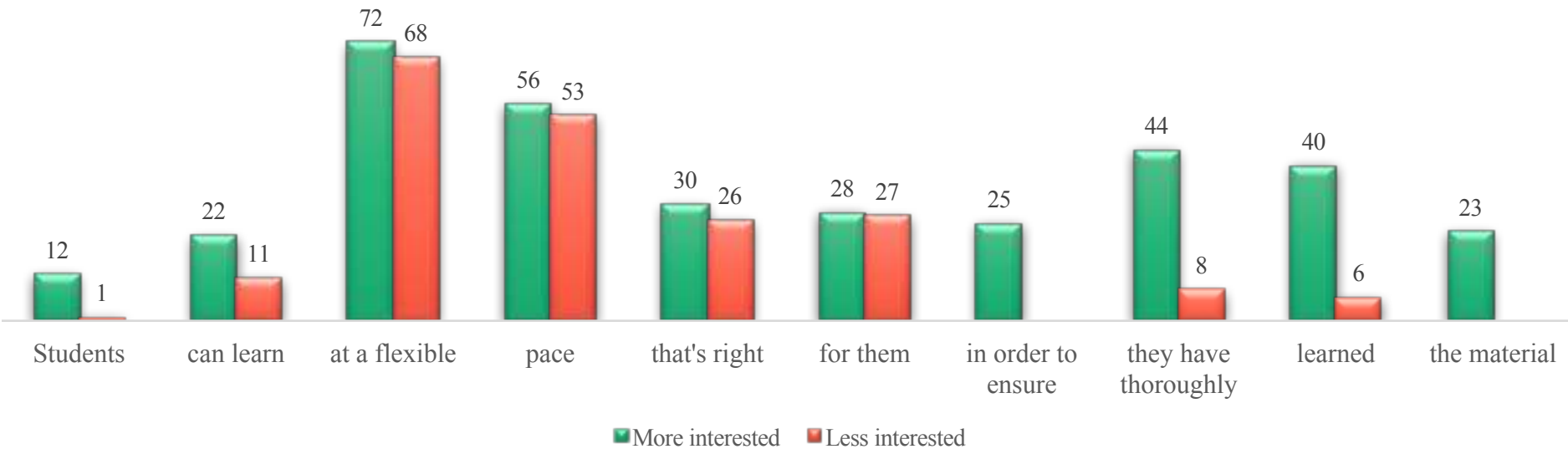
Students will move to new concepts and skills when they demonstrate mastery of the skills that need to come before it.





After hearing the statement below, voters were
74% more interested, 38% much more.

Students can learn at a flexible pace that's right for them in order to ensure they have thoroughly learned the material.

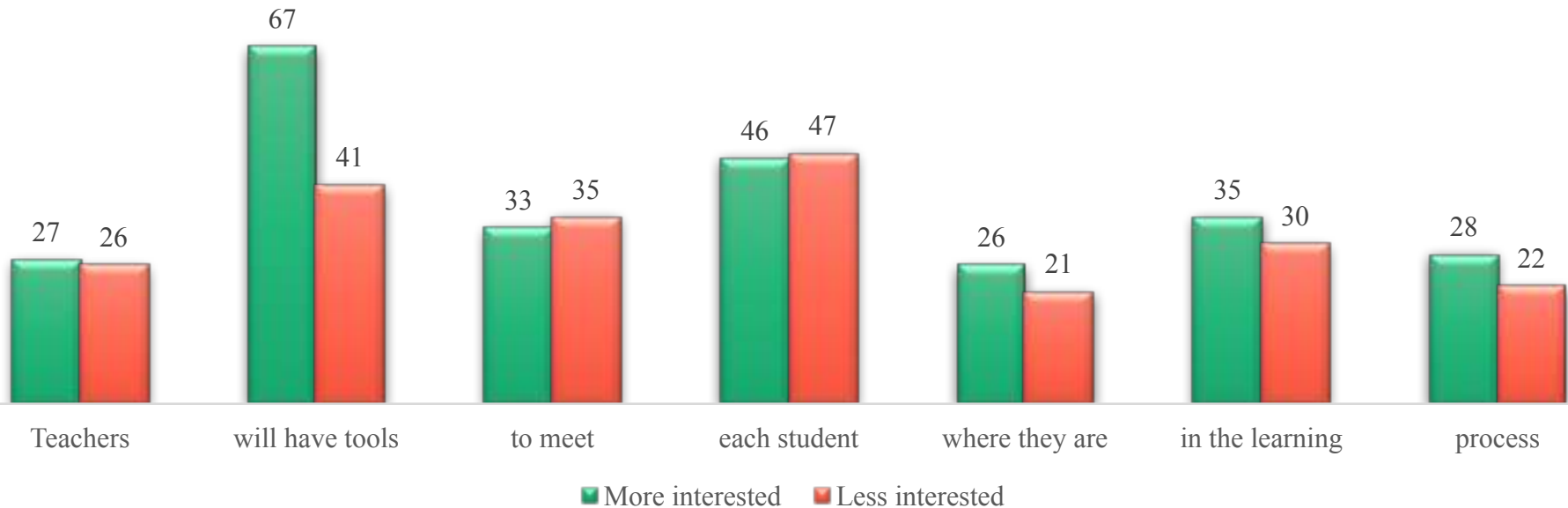


MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE



After hearing the statement below, voters were
73% more interested, 38% much more.

Teachers will have tools to meet each student where they are in the learning process.

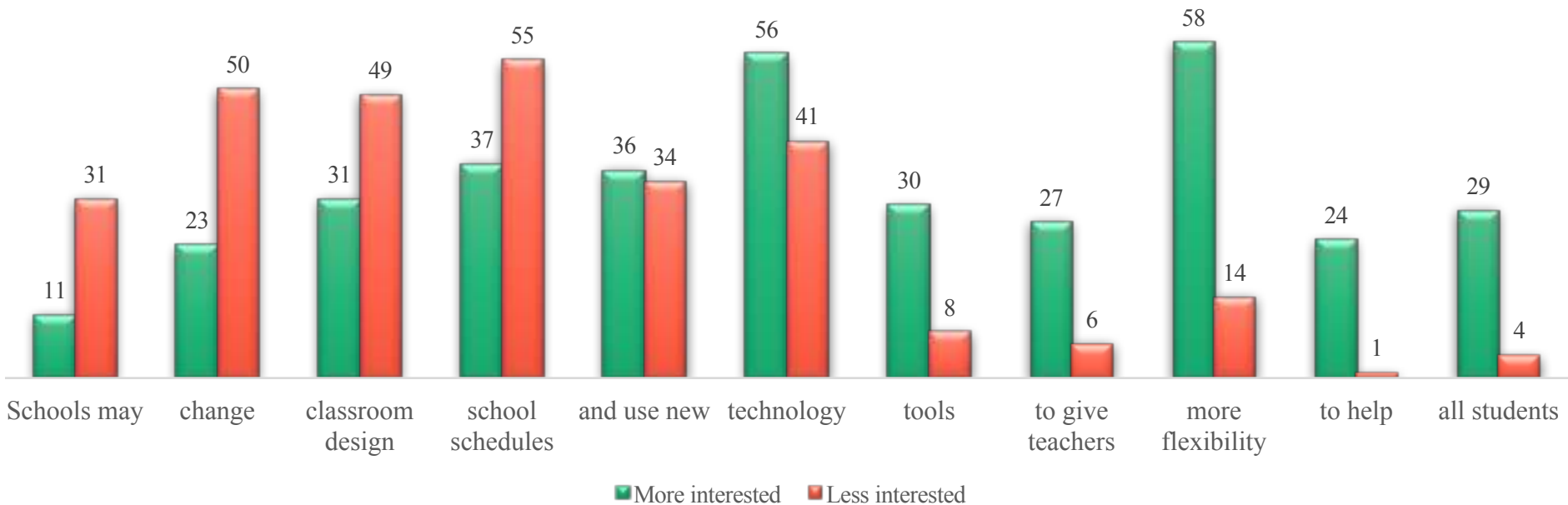


TEACHER FLEXIBILITY



After hearing the statement below, voters were
71% more interested, 36% much more.

Schools may change classroom design, school schedules, and use new technology tools to give teachers more flexibility to help all students.

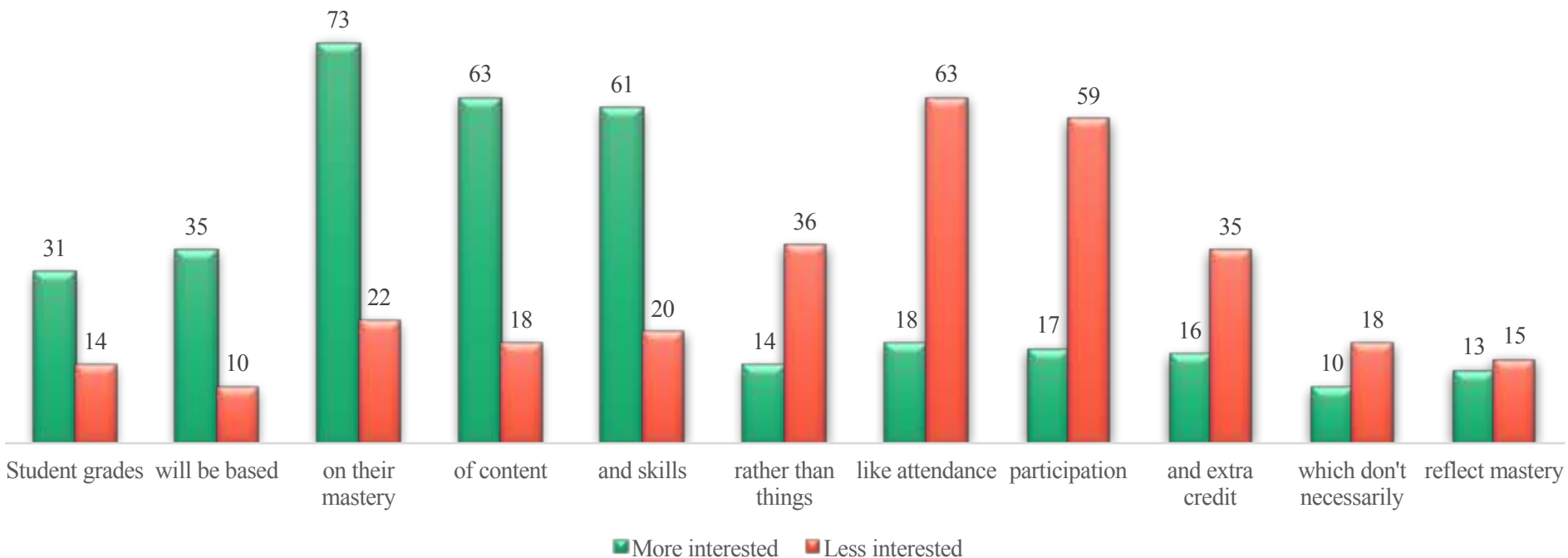


MEANINGFUL GRADES



After hearing the statement below, voters were
65% more interested, 34% much more.

Student grades will be based on their mastery of content and skills rather than things like attendance, participation and extra credit which don't necessarily reflect mastery.



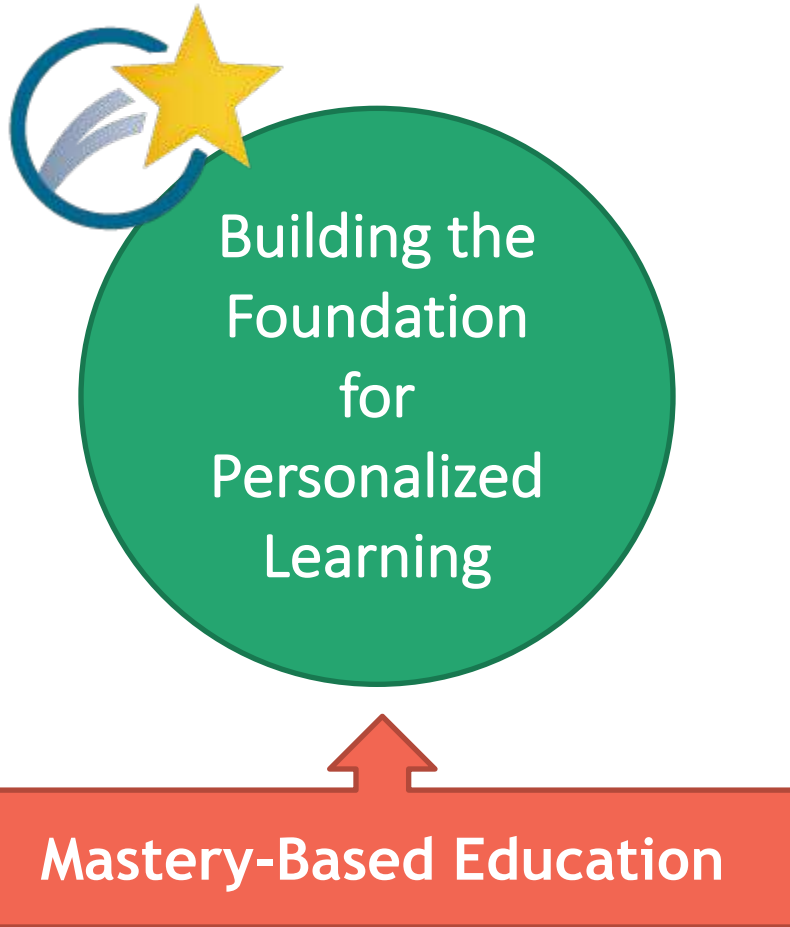
Negative Messages



- Students will be evaluated on test after test, meaning even more *standardized testing* in schools.
- Learning at their own pace means students will do more learning on computers and *less interacting* with peers and teachers.
- Teachers will be *overworked* and expected to do too much for too many students.



- Schools will not be able to successfully implement this because it will *cost too much* to get enough teachers and materials to personalize lessons for each student.
- Schools will make their curriculum easier and *set low expectations* in order to make it look like students aren't falling behind.



Personalized Learning

- Personalized learning tailors a student's educational experience to meet their unique strengths, interests and needs. In addition, it provides opportunities for increased interaction with teachers and peers and higher levels of student engagement. Students are encouraged to play a greater role - and be more invested - in their learning.
- Coupled with flexibility in pace and delivery, personalized learning is grounded in the idea that students should progress when they demonstrate mastery of key content and skills regardless of the time spent in class or even where instruction takes place.

Discussion

Change? Why are we doing this?



Making the Case





Do you think that students today who graduate with a high school diploma and with good enough grades to get into college are generally ready to succeed in college or career?

Yes, most = 18% - Yes, some = 56%

Do we need to think differently about how school works in America these days?

Strongly agree = 51% - Somewhat agree = 36%



Schools in America are **inadequate** and therefore we should rethink how we educate children.

Strongly agree = 42% - Somewhat agree = 34%

Schools in America are **outdated** and therefore we should rethink how we educate children.

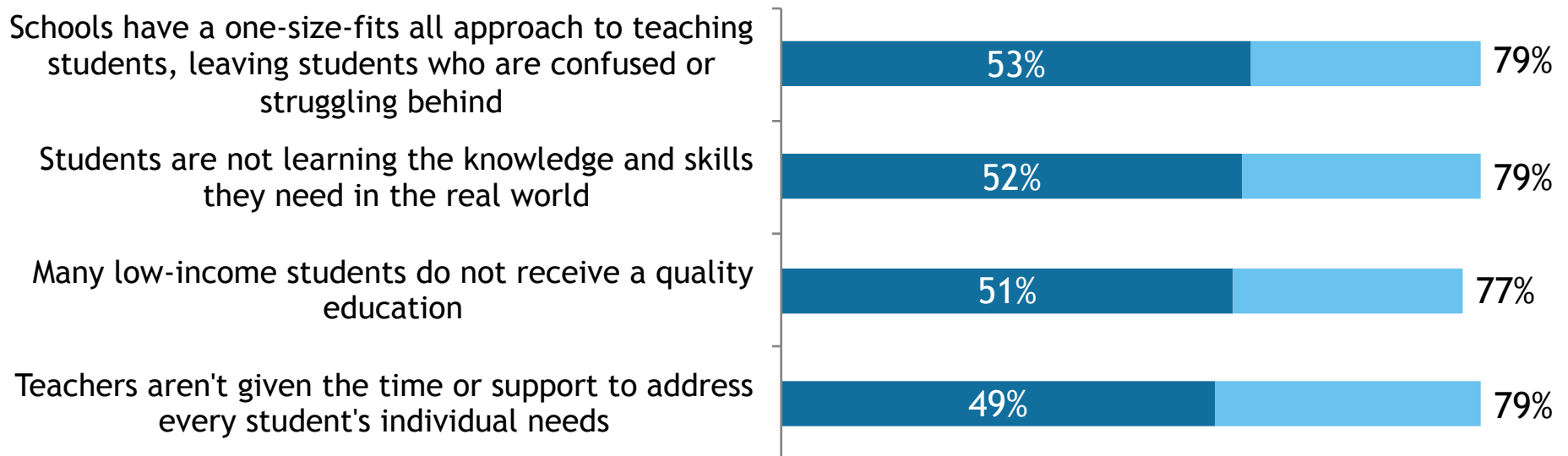
Strongly agree = 28% - Somewhat agree = 41%

Making the Case - Parents



Below is a list of concerns some have about education today. Please say whether each is a major concern, a moderate concern, a minor concern, or not really a concern to you personally.

Parents - Top Tier Concerns



Darker colors indicate intensity

■ Major concern ■ Moderate concern



Focus on the future

Knowledge and Skills
(transparency)

More interaction with teachers

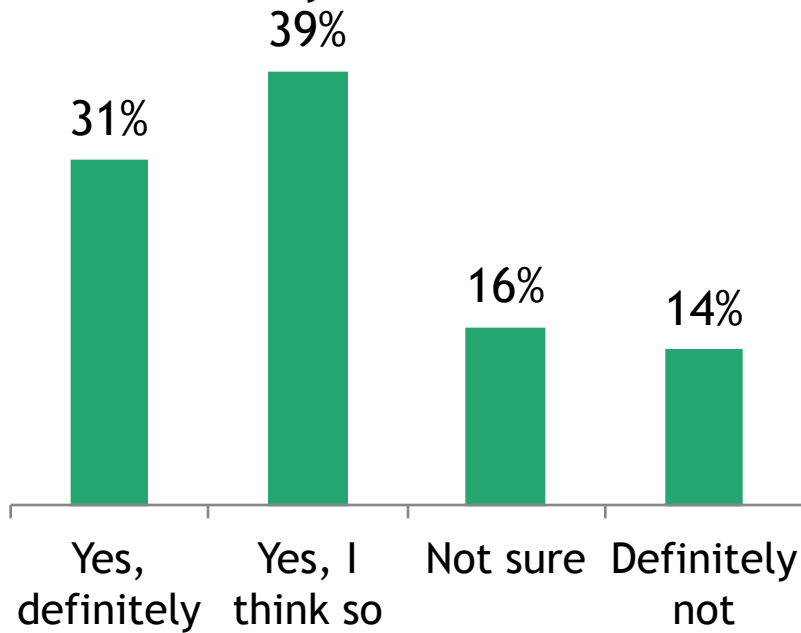
One-size-fits-all.

Reality check

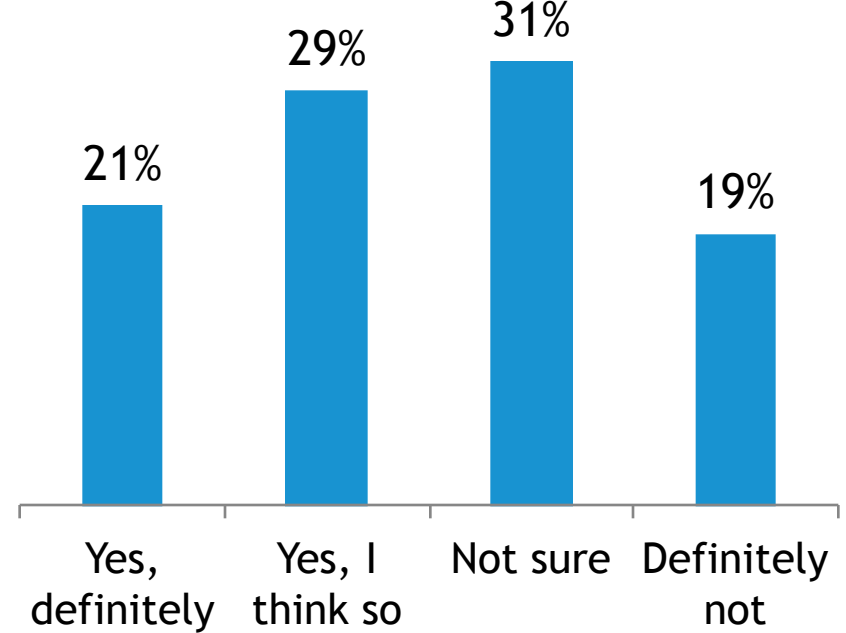


About 70% of teachers think they are using personalized learning, and about half of parents think this is practiced in their children's classrooms.

Teachers: To the best of your knowledge, are you using personalized learning in the classes you teach?



Parents: To the best of your knowledge, do teachers practice personalized learning in any of your children's classrooms?

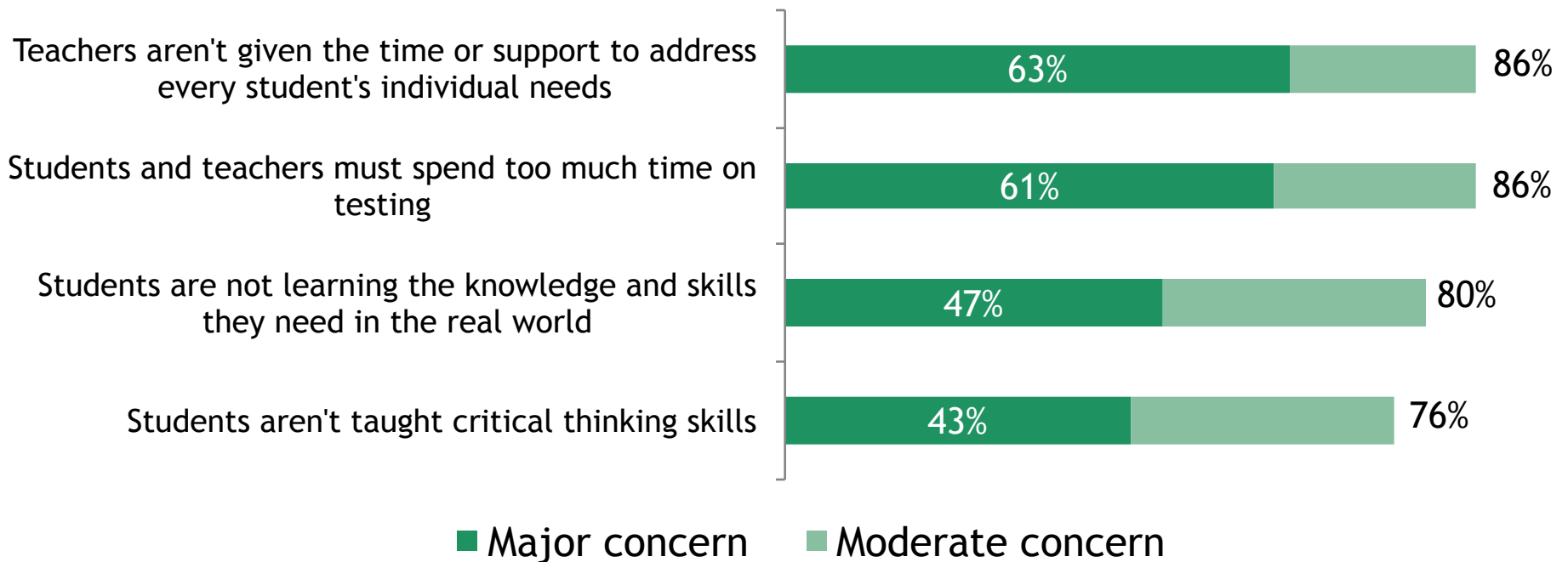


Making the Case - Teachers



Below is a list of concerns some have about education today. Please say whether each is a major concern, a moderate concern, a minor concern, or not really a concern to you personally.

Teachers - Top Tier Concerns



Darker colors indicate intensity



-
- NOT A NEW REFORM.
 - Building off current work and school initiatives
-

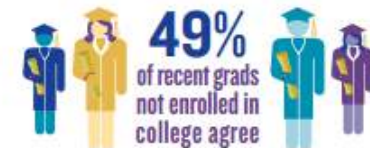
Giving teachers the tools, flexibility and support they need to meet the needs of all kids.

The students will be truly prepared for the next class, grade, semester.

Making the Case - The Public



Source: Achieve, *Rising to the Challenge: Views on High School Graduates' Preparedness for College*, July 2014.



Source: Achieve, *Rising to the Challenge: Views on High School Graduates' Preparedness for College*, July 2014.

Nellie Mae Education Foundation: While about half of New Englanders think public high school graduates are prepared for college and career, the majority agree the reality of remedial course-taking is not acceptable.

Perception - Identifying The Problem



Diplomas and credits based on seat time and passing grades have been sending mixed messages.

86% of surveyed community college students **believe** they are academically prepared for college

YET

68% take developmental education.

90% of parents **believe** their children are at or above grade level in reading

YET

34% of students are proficient in reading.

83% of community college students who were “A” students in high school **believe** they are on-track

YET

39% earn a degree or certificate within six years.



- Meaningful diplomas

Remediation

False signals and mixed messages

Knowledge and skills



1. LOCAL
2. LOCAL
3. LOCAL

ARE YOU
READY?

What Do Voters Want to Know?



We Asked

“Across the country schools are beginning to adopt “personalized learning” where students advance to higher levels of learning when they personally demonstrate mastery of concepts and skills, regardless of time, pace, or place. It moves us beyond our current system of grades and credits to one where students must show they have mastered a skill or body of knowledge before moving on to the next concept or skill.”

Having just read this description, what questions come to mind about this idea?

How Do We Address These Questions?

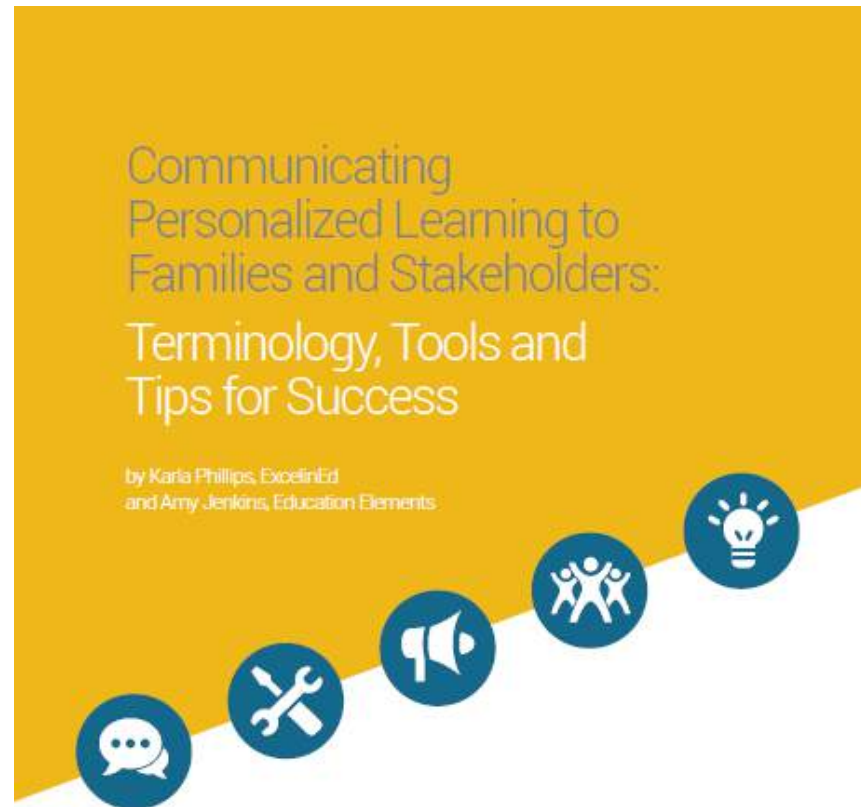


- *“How well will the students adjust to this? Will it hurt the students socially amongst their peers if they advance at a quicker rate or vice versa? Who will be responsible to make sure the student fully grasps the subject at hand? Who determines the “acceptable level” that the students are attempting to attain?”*
- *“Regarding the term “mastery”, is there a federal minimum standard or are the standards left to the states to define?”*
- *“How will mastery be determined? What will be done to prevent unmotivated students from simply giving up? Is there some sort of bias for which types of students are more likely to be able to succeed (due to resources, time, etc.)”*
- *“How does it work in practice? What criteria must a student meet to advance to the next level? How is the program evaluated? What are the results so far?”*



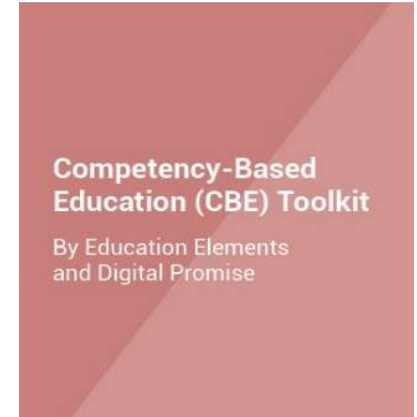
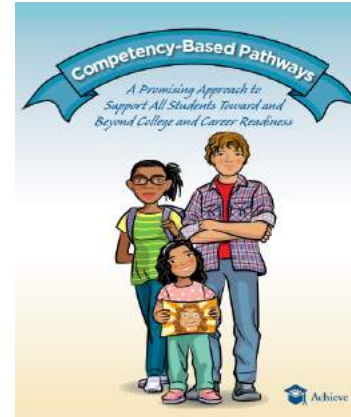
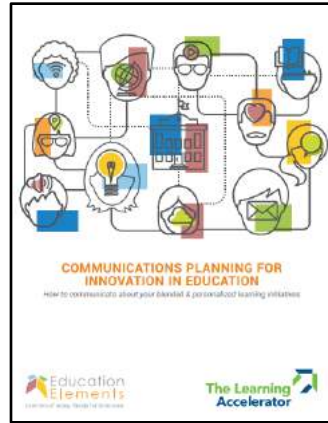
Incorporating results of recent message testing, the Communications Guide offers:

- Lessons Learned
- Making the Case for Change
- Parent Priorities
- Winning Messages





Toolkits



[CBE State Policy Communications Toolkit](#)
[Communications Planning for Innovation](#)

[Achieve Communications Toolkit](#)
[Competency-Based Education Toolkit](#)

Videos



[Competency-Based Education: Building a Foundation for Personalized Learning](#)



[Competency-Based Education: Engaging Students and Personalizing Learning](#)



[Competency Education and Personalized Learning](#)

Discussion



ExcelinEd

Thank You!

Karla Phillips

Policy Director, Personalized Learning

karla@excelined.org

@azkarla

Foundation for Excellence in Education

P.O. Box 10691

Tallahassee, FL 32302

850.391.4090

Info@ExcelinEd.org

www.ExcelinEd.org