Allen County Research Project

Conducted during the 2024-2025 school year, this project explored how Allen County School's new system of Profile of a Patriot competencies, project-based learning (PBL), and exhibitions of learning are **changing the relationship between the community and the district**.

Conducted by
CIE Center for Innovation in Education | UK

And by
6
ACS high school student researchers

Engaging
700+
ACS students, parents, educators, and community members

Learn more about the project at: **www.leadingwithlearning.org/allencodata**
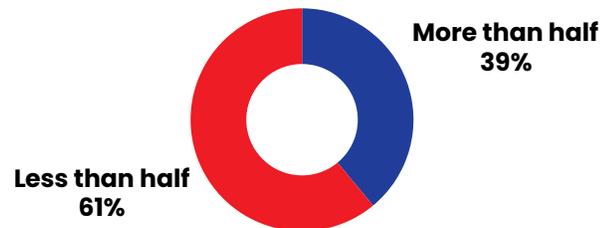
Findings

1 **Project-based learning is happening and spreading throughout ACS. And, more work can be done to ensure every student is experiencing high-quality opportunities to the fullest extent.**

"'Feedback loop' and 'iteration' are becoming a little bit more common. They're becoming part of our vernacular in our classrooms."
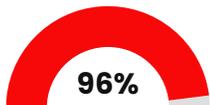*- Administrator*

"In my [science class], we do a lot of hands on things which help me see the aspects of everything and learn, compared to another classroom [where I'm] just reading a textbook and not getting much out of it."
- Student

Students: How many of your classes use PBL?

More than half
39%

Less than half
61%

2 **Students, parents, and educators feel satisfied by the district's new direction and are committed to supporting it.**

Parent Support:

96%
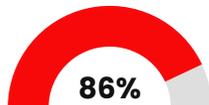Feel the district's goals match their own goals for their child

93%
Feel personally committed to helping the district

Student Support:

79%
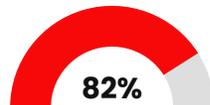Favor the shift to PBL

86%
Feel PBL helps them become better problem solvers

Teacher Support:

69%
Prefer PBL over more traditional teaching styles

82%
See more student growth using PBL

"I think that project-based learning is the most awesome thing that's ever happened.... It really provides an opportunity for students to get experience that they would not have otherwise. Anytime that an assignment can be relevant and real, I know that students perform much better."

- Teacher

3 High levels of satisfaction were boosted by the district's efforts to intentionally include people in the design and implementation of this work. And, more work can be done to engage even more people.

Deep Listening Builds Trust:

People were more likely to develop trust and confidence in the district when they were engaged with empathy (heart to heart) and not just intellectually (head to head).

Heart to Heart — **84%** ▲ trust

Head to Head — **50%**

"That's what I have been most pleased about - that we didn't just choose to do this because a certain small group of 30 or 35 said, hey, this is what we should do. We really have included as many people as possible. "

- Teacher

"Just like anything new, the community [needs to become] more aware of what we're trying to do. ...That's an ongoing effort that that we need to [keep up], to make more people aware of what we're doing."

- Community member

Empowerment Creates Ownership:

People were more likely to develop a sense of ownership and personal commitment to supporting district efforts when they were involved in making decisions (empowered) and not just told about something (informed) or asked for one-time input (included).

Empowered — **89%** ▲ ownership

Informed or Included — **64%**

"The community has always felt a tremendous amount of ownership over athletics..... What I think we have to work toward is letting the community feel that same level of ownership over the academic output, and over the pedagogy that occurs. And I think that as we continue to engage the community about more than, 'Hey, would you like to sponsor the football booster club?' – and we instead turn that around to be, 'Hey, would you like to participate in a defense of learning?'... [It will] really help everyone to have more ownership of the process."

- Community business leader

Recommendations for ACS

1 Continue to engage students, families, educators, and business and community leaders in designing, monitoring, and participating in the changes to teaching, learning, and assessment. Practicing habits like inclusion, empathy, co-creation, and reciprocity can help sustain the work and ensure the district continues addressing what the community wants.

2 Continue finding creative ways to communicate about the importance of the shift toward real-world, project-based learning; and to reach members of the community beyond those who are already engaged.

3 Continue providing coaching, professional development, and planning time to teachers, especially supporting more technical aspects of aligning content standards to Profile competencies, and designing and scoring performance assessments.

4 Continue to engage its community in reflecting on levels of community inclusion, satisfaction, and ownership; and in collectively identifying next steps to support the work.

What is project-based learning? Let the Allen County-Scottsville HS research team show you at: **https://youtu.be/8Xlo_-SOJqA**