



**ONE SCHOOLHOUSE**  
*partners in innovation*

## The Pedagogy of One Schoolhouse

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### ***An Independent Approach to Curriculum and Pedagogy Online***

One Schoolhouse transforms education and empowers learning by leading through innovation, inspiring learners, and partnering with schools and organizations. One Schoolhouse courses are intentionally developed to be learner-driven, informed by seminal and emerging constructivist education research and by data gathered within our own living practice. The pedagogical approach is designed backwards<sup>1</sup> from competencies and the lessons are personalized to honor learners' unique needs<sup>2</sup> and identities,<sup>3</sup> and to pursue adaptive expertise.<sup>4</sup>

Our approach to teaching and learning is predicated on the belief that schooling as we know it must change. One Schoolhouse is an organization where strategic initiatives are shaped by both the needs of our partner schools, teachers, and students, and by disruptive innovations that effect educational change.<sup>5</sup> As a supplemental school, One Schoolhouse does not endeavor to replicate holistic school life, but we are fundamentally preparing students for college<sup>6</sup> and challenging them with dynamic learning experiences. What follows is a summary of the most relevant literature and practice, from expert opinion and broad survey to empirical research, related to the pedagogical principles and practices of One Schoolhouse.

### ***From Principles to Practice***

One Schoolhouse recasts school through the lens of how students – each with their own unique identity – grow. This pedagogical paradigm shift positions learning, rather than teaching, as the design driver through the implementation of a competency-based, personalized approach wherein progress towards mastery is expertly crafted to scaffold for goals-based growth in the online space.

Here at One Schoolhouse, ***personalized learning*** is a learner-driven pedagogical approach in which individual students work towards mastery and demonstrate acquisition of competencies. A ***competency*** is a cultivatable aptitude (or collection of skills) that captures our values and is measurable.<sup>7</sup> One Schoolhouse personalizes our online courses because it allows us to take what independent school teachers do so well (build relationships + differentiate instruction) and add pathways that improve the experience of both the teacher and the student. Efficiency (i.e.: time) and effectiveness (i.e.: mastery) are gained through a series of transitions: the teacher assumes the role of designer and coach, students approach school from a growth rather than fixed mindset,<sup>8</sup> and change is quantified and measured.<sup>9</sup> One Schoolhouse teachers complete the transition from a teacher-driven or student-centered<sup>10</sup> model to a learner-driven<sup>11</sup> model through an intensive training course followed by ongoing individual, intentional annual coaching,<sup>12</sup> which is the most effective way to cultivate professional growth.<sup>13</sup> The future of learning is competency- and process-based, requiring that responsibility shift from the teacher to the learner. The metrics for mastery are measured by artifacts, rather than tests, that authentically demonstrate what students learned -- which is what we value most -- rather than what teachers taught.

At One Schoolhouse, we have two school-wide competencies, both of which are measured regularly: Students will (1) gain academic maturity as they learn to thrive online, and (2) engage constructively in a diverse and changing world. The competencies honor the intersection<sup>14</sup> of the traditional disciplines with noncognitive traits and habits.<sup>15</sup> To these, teachers develop one to three additional course-specific competencies. Then the personalized pedagogy brings the competency-based learning experience to life in the online classroom.<sup>16</sup>

We start with what all thriving schools do well: build authentic relationships with students<sup>17,18</sup> because this allows us to develop ***academic maturity*** in our students. Recognizing that the student-teacher relationship forms the foundation for all learning,<sup>19</sup> we position the students' ability to learn online as the first lesson because it is an

essential college and career readiness competency.<sup>20</sup> While many students are initially attracted to One Schoolhouse courses because they are looking for a particular class or for the flexibility afforded by the online platform, One Schoolhouse students report that the breadth of skills developed exceeds the curricular objectives.<sup>21</sup>

Courses are scaffolded to promote iteration and designed to reward persistence. Students not only practice responsibility, intellectual adaptability, interpersonal flexibility, self-regulation and organization, and a range of communication skills, but they are also taught to make healthy decisions around time, self-care, and limits.<sup>22</sup> Because students are given voice and choice in how they access new knowledge and practice new skills,<sup>23</sup> and they are equipped to self-assess for understanding,<sup>24</sup> their growth can be quantified.<sup>25</sup> When combined with self and peer formative assessment, teacher feedback<sup>26</sup> links students' goals to the development of competencies in a way that promotes deep skill development and sustained mastery.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, choice increases meaning and engagement,<sup>28</sup> and engaged students learn more.<sup>29</sup>

To be able to *engage constructively in a diverse and changing world*, students need to spend the bulk of their learning time in the research, exploration, interactive, and problem-solving activities that shape cultural competence and neural capacity.<sup>30</sup> They develop an inclusive world view when they encounter people and ideas that are different from their own, practice empathy, work collaboratively, respectfully defend their position with facts, and demonstrate mastery through real-world application.<sup>31</sup> By engaging in activities that make learning relevant, students practice intellectual curiosity as they assimilate facts to solve an interdisciplinary problem, analyze a new situation, create meaning from a range of sources, or build a tool.<sup>32</sup>

The architecture of education at One Schoolhouse is fundamentally different because we strive to make permeable the barrier between school and life.<sup>33</sup> This is identity honoring work,<sup>34</sup> and can only be accomplished in a learning environment that respects diversity, is designed for equity, tackles complicity,<sup>35</sup> and creates a deep sense of belonging.<sup>36</sup> We model engagement in a diverse and changing world through *inclusive innovation*. Inclusive innovation is an equity-based design model that ensures that courses adapt and grow in ways that support full participation<sup>37</sup> and safe-risking for all learners.<sup>38</sup> Courses are developed to magnify opportunities for learner agency<sup>39</sup> and efficacy.<sup>40</sup> Learners are invited to take ownership<sup>41</sup> of their instruction and process content using pathways that are authentic to them.<sup>42</sup> Pedagogical and curriculum systems, processes, and practices source contributions from learners, school partners, teachers, and experts to ensure the learning environment is contextually and culturally relevant. Regular assessments, bias-reducing rubrics,<sup>43</sup> and continuous feedback allow gaps to be measured so that particular identities, experiences, perspectives, or ways of being are not negated or privileged.

## **Conclusion**

Neither education nor learning is static at One Schoolhouse. Harkening back to the founding of our first program, the Online School for Girls in 2009, research on standing best practices, coupled with pioneering online experiments and inclusive innovations, drive specific emphasis on values-based curricular and pedagogical design. By providing all students with the freedom to wonder, evaluate, apply, and do, we lay the foundation for a different approach to lifelong learning. This is school reimaged.

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