

Gulf Islands Secondary School

Creativity | Learning | Community

Full Report: Core Competency Self Reflection and Goal Setting February 2025

At each reporting period, all students at GISS are asked to complete a Core Competency Self Reflection and Goal Setting Activity. This full report goes into greater detail of what was captured in their responses at the end of Semester 1 in the 2024-25 school year. What we learn through our student's voice can help us improve our understanding of how students are doing, and how they understand their development in these areas, and what goals and desires they have for themselves.

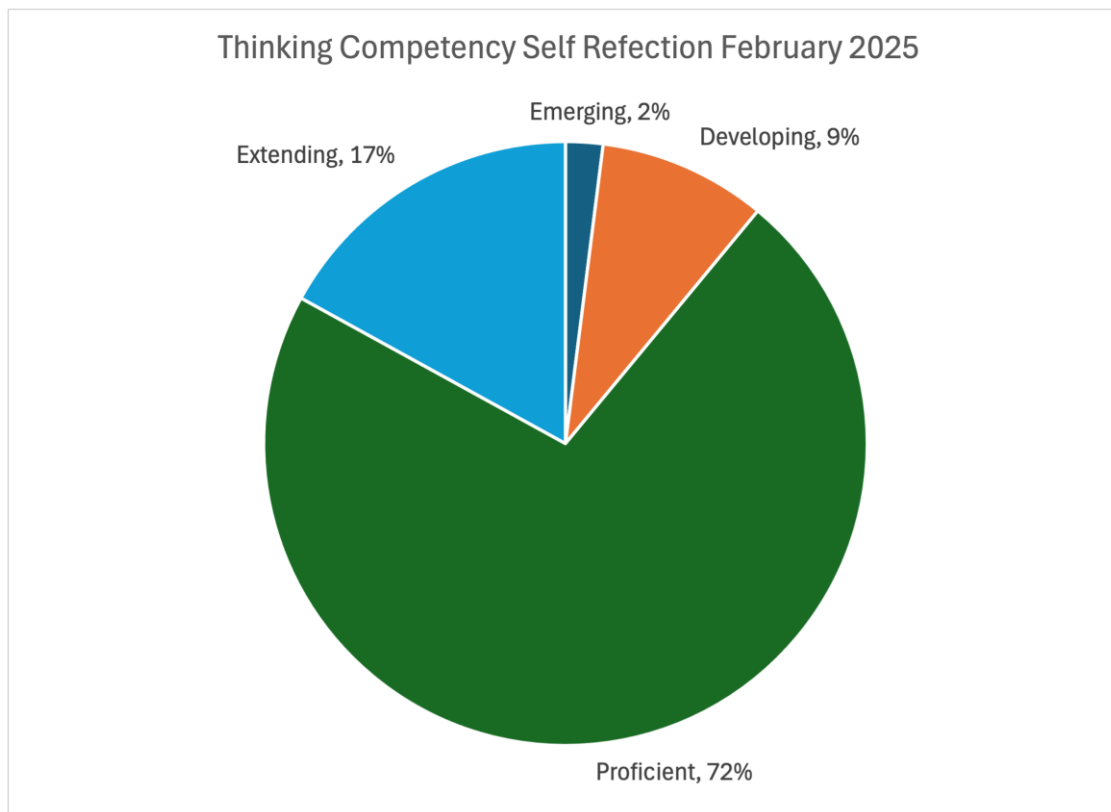
Thinking Competency

The Thinking Competency is described as including knowledge, skills and processes we associate with intellectual development. It is through their competency as thinkers that students take subject-specific concepts and content and transform them into a new understanding.

Thinking competence includes specific thinking skills as well as habits of mind, and metacognitive awareness (thinking about your thinking.) These are used to process information from a variety of sources and to create new understandings.

Students were asked to reflect on their previous term and think about how they were developing in terms of their Thinking Competency. They were asked to describe their current level, based on the following criteria:

- **Emerging** - I am not currently developing or demonstrating my Thinking Competency, I have work to do in this area.
- **Developing** - Although I am developing or demonstrating my Thinking Competency somewhat, I could do more in this area.
- **Proficient** - I am consistently developing and demonstrating my Thinking Competency at school.
- **Extending** - I am consistently developing and demonstrating my Thinking Competency, and I am going above and beyond in this area.



As you can see, 89% of students described themselves as proficient (72%) or extending (17%). Also, 11% described themselves as developing (9%) or emerging (2%) in this competency.

Students were then asked to explain why they described themselves at the level above. They could use examples of tasks, units, projects or performances that they have done in school this semester, that demonstrate the Thinking Competency level they gave in their self-reflection.

Below is a thematic summary of the reasons why students believe they are demonstrating their Thinking Competency at school, with direct quotes drawn from their own words. Frequent ideas and examples are grouped into themes to show the breadth of ways students describe using thinking skills in class.

1. Problem Solving in Academic Subjects

Many students mention math, science, socials, and other classes as places where they must think critically and solve problems:

- *“I could work through a math problem or a science project or equation.”*
- *“Recently in math I have been proud of thinking in different directions and ways about questions to come to a solution.”*
- *“In social studies I use information I’ve been given to form new ideas and opinions.”*

- *“I’m taking chemistry, anatomy, physics, and calculus which require constant thinking and problem solving.”*

They emphasize tackling complex or “deep” problems, learning new concepts, and adjusting their approach until they reach a solution.

2. Metacognitive Awareness (“Thinking About My Thinking”)

A number of students explicitly reference reflecting on their own thought processes:

- *“I have been thinking about and researching how people learn, so that I can learn and study more effectively.”*
- *“I’m constantly wondering about the relationship between pieces of information.”*
- *“When tackling problems, if my strategy is not working, I can take a step back and create a better strategy.”*

They see value in self-reflection, noticing biases, and strategizing about their next steps to improve their own understanding.

3. Creative and Critical Thinking

Some responses highlight how students adapt, innovate, or generate new ideas:

- *“I can create and develop ideas into the real world.”*
- *“I am constantly coming up with creative ideas to enhance my work and give me a better grade.”*
- *“I always critically think in any class whether it’s gym or math class.”*
- *“I try to think outside the box.”*

They mention how creativity and critical thought help them express original ideas in subjects like English, art, social studies, and group projects.

4. Overcoming Challenges and Persistence

Students frequently mention challenges with focus, complexity, or motivation, yet they still persevere:

- *“I can think and solve problems well but sometimes if something is too difficult, I will give up.”*
- *“I am not the best at finding the answers, but I keep trying to solve problems.”*
- *“I’m very passionate about the things I love and dive deeply into those topics but fall short when it comes to things that bore me.”*

They see effort, resilience, and seeking help as integral parts of their thinking process.

5. Confidence and Self-Perception

Some students’ reasons reflect confidence in their own thinking skills:

- *“I’m the best.”*
- *“I’m pretty darn smart.”*
- *“I am a very competent thinker.”*

- *“I believe my thinking competence is currently at an extending level because my skills in my many academics are very strong.”*

Others have a more mixed or developing perspective:

- *“I don’t know... I think about stuff just fine.”*
- *“I think my thinking is bad.”*
- *“I zone out a lot and can’t focus most of the time.”*

This range shows how students’ self-reflections vary widely, from very confident to uncertain or self-critical.

6. School Projects and Classroom Discussions

Finally, many students point to practical examples of demonstrating thinking in class projects or group work:

- *“I make my ideas work or I change what I am doing... For example, I showed my thinking in social studies for the group project.”*
- *“I always try to express my opinions. I think about how to navigate conversation and how to add on to them.”*
- *“In my engineering projects I had to design things extensively and build based off those designs.”*

They note class discussions, group assignments, labs, and presentations as key settings to show evidence of their thinking competency.

Overall Takeaways

Subject-Based Challenges: Math, science, and social studies are common sources for demonstrating analytical skills.

Metacognition: Many students actively reflect on how they learn and think.

Critical & Creative Thought: Students see themselves using creativity and reasoning to generate ideas or find solutions.

Resilience & Effort: Struggles with focus or difficulty don’t stop most from persisting or seeking help.

Confidence vs. Uncertainty: Self-perceptions vary widely—some feel “the best,” others are unsure or highlight their struggles.

Practical School Examples: Real-world tasks—class discussions, labs, presentations—are repeatedly cited as proof of their thinking in action.

Overall, students link their Thinking Competency to **problem solving, self-reflection, creativity,** and **adapting in different school-based contexts.** These personal quotes affirm that daily classroom tasks—projects, discussions, written assignments—are where they feel their thinking truly comes to life.

Next, we looked at these responses about the Thinking Competency in another way, and asked what are the differences between those that rank themselves as Extending/Proficient versus Developing/Emerging?

Below is a thematic overview of why students rated themselves as Extending/Proficient versus Developing/Emerging in their Thinking Competency, along with direct quotes to illustrate each group's reasoning. We'll also highlight classroom or school experiences that students identified as influencing their self-assessment.

1. Extending: "Above and Beyond"

Common Themes

- Deep or complex coursework (e.g., multiple difficult classes, advanced subjects).
- Strong critical-thinking skills and deliberate metacognitive strategies (self-reflection, thinking about how they learn).
- High confidence in their ability to tackle tough problems or think "outside the box."
- Persistence and curiosity: going beyond basic requirements, often re-checking or exploring topics for deeper understanding.

Representative Quotes

- *"I have challenging courses that involve a lot of deep thinking to understand. I work hard to understand topics and think through hard problems."*
- *"Constantly adjusting the way I think in my math class to adapt."*
- *"I always critically think in any class whether it's gym or math class."*
- *"I believe my thinking competence is at the 'extending' level... my skills in my many academics are very strong and I believe my thinking strategies are very effective."*
- *"I am consistently expanding my thinking skills inside of school and outside of school. Inside school, I demonstrate my thinking skills by actively asking questions and participating in discussions."*
- *"I am a creative and critical thinker. When completing an English assignment, I can think creatively... and I can think critically... properly analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of my work."*

Classroom Context

- Often mention upper-level math/science courses ("Pre-Cal, Chem, Anatomy, Physics"), describing how these subjects push them to extend their thinking.
- Emphasize group projects or class discussions where they go beyond "just enough" to truly dissect information or propose new ideas.
- Point to metacognitive habits: "I take notes to help my understanding... I think about my biases when I learn."

2. Proficient: "Consistently Developing and Demonstrating"

Common Themes

- Feel comfortable and capable in most subjects (especially math and science) and can solve problems.
- Use critical and creative thinking regularly but may not always go “beyond what’s required.”
- Often reference being able to reflect, ask questions, or connect ideas across classes.
- May have specific areas where they excel, and they know how to apply thinking strategies but still see room for growth.

Representative Quotes

- “I think my thinking competency is proficient because I could work through a math problem or a science project or equation.”
- “I take time when working on a project to really see the bigger picture... I try to really listen and think about what my teacher is saying.”
- *“Recently in math I have been proud of thinking in different directions and ways about questions to come to a solution.”*
- *“I feel like I have a good understanding of things and I’m able to explain them.”*
- *“I’m a pretty solid thinker, and I’m able to apply what is known to other concepts.”*
- *“In classes such as English 10, I can demonstrate my creative thinking and my ability to express my own critical thought.”*

Classroom Context

- Repeatedly refer to math, science, and socials for problem-solving or analyzing new content.
- Many mention project work: “I showed my thinking in social studies for the group project...”
- Some talk about reflection: “I think carefully for my schoolwork... I also notice myself questioning my thinking process on a daily basis.”
- They often highlight that school assignments and consistent practice across multiple subjects help them sustain a proficient level.

3. Developing: “Could Do More”

Common Themes

- A sense of partial confidence: they can demonstrate thinking skills but still get confused or struggle to go deeper.
- Admit to needing more practice, motivation, or focus (sometimes mention procrastination, stress, or learning pace).
- Often note a desire to improve and more actively apply their thinking strategies.

Representative Quotes

- “I understand some stuff in class but get confused with other stuff, I feel like I have a decent level of thinking competency.”
- “I think I’m developing because sometimes I have a hard time understanding stuff.”

- “I am always trying to solve problems and figure out my work but sometimes I am not the best at finding the answers.”
- “I think my thinking could definitely be improved as in class it takes me more time to understand things.”
- “I zone out a lot and I just can’t focus most of the time.”

Classroom Context

- Cite struggles with certain academic subjects (especially math/science) where deeper understanding is needed.
- Some mention needing more support or time for difficult tasks and want to build better study habits.
- A few mention lack of challenging work: “The tasks... are very easy and don’t require a lot of thinking... I could do more.”

4. Emerging: “Have Work to Do”

Common Themes

- Some express fundamental learning barriers (e.g., “learning issues”) or very low confidence in their thinking skills.
- May not currently feel they are demonstrating the competency at all, or they feel “stuck.”

Representative Quotes

- *“It’s because I am having learning issues.”*
- *“I think my thinking is bad.”*
- [No explanation given in some cases, but the rating indicated not developing the competency yet.]

Classroom Context

- Students sometimes reference underlying personal or academic struggles that keep them from engaging or applying their thinking.
- No detailed examples of positive classroom experiences—often just highlight difficulty or an overall sense of not being able to demonstrate thinking yet.

5. Key Differences & Highlights

Depth of Reflection:

- Extending students talk more about pushing themselves academically and using multiple strategies (e.g., note-taking, exploring beyond class requirements).
- Proficient students generally feel comfortable meeting expectations and mention problem-solving but don’t always detail pushing beyond.
- Developing and Emerging references center around struggles, confusion, or lack of focus—they see the gap in their skills or external barriers.

Classroom Engagement:

- Extending/Proficient often point to concrete schoolwork—math/science labs, social studies projects, English essays—where they demonstrate their thinking.
- Developing/Emerging highlight difficulties or lack of challenge that prevent full demonstration of thinking skills.

Confidence vs. Uncertainty:

- Many Extending respondents show high self-efficacy (“I am going above and beyond,” “I’m pretty darn smart”).
- Proficient have moderate to high confidence but not as overt as “extending.”
- Developing/Emerging** have more hesitation or indicate specific weaknesses.

Use of Metacognition:

- Extending students frequently mention reflection (“I step back if a strategy isn’t working...”).
- Proficient mention occasionally checking their approach or thinking.
- Developing/Emerging rarely mention self-reflection beyond stating they know they’re not at a higher level.

In Summary

- Extending students cite advanced coursework, deep reflection, and active curiosity. They emphasize deliberate strategies (critical/creative thinking, note-taking, re-checking) and show high confidence.
- Proficient students describe consistent problem-solving in academic subjects (especially math or science) and often connect ideas across classes. They feel comfortable at the expected level but may not always push themselves beyond.
- Developing students talk about partial understanding, confusion, or lack of focus. They see potential for growth but recognize they need more time or support.
- Emerging students identify basic hurdles or significant learning challenges, stating they are not demonstrating the competency yet.

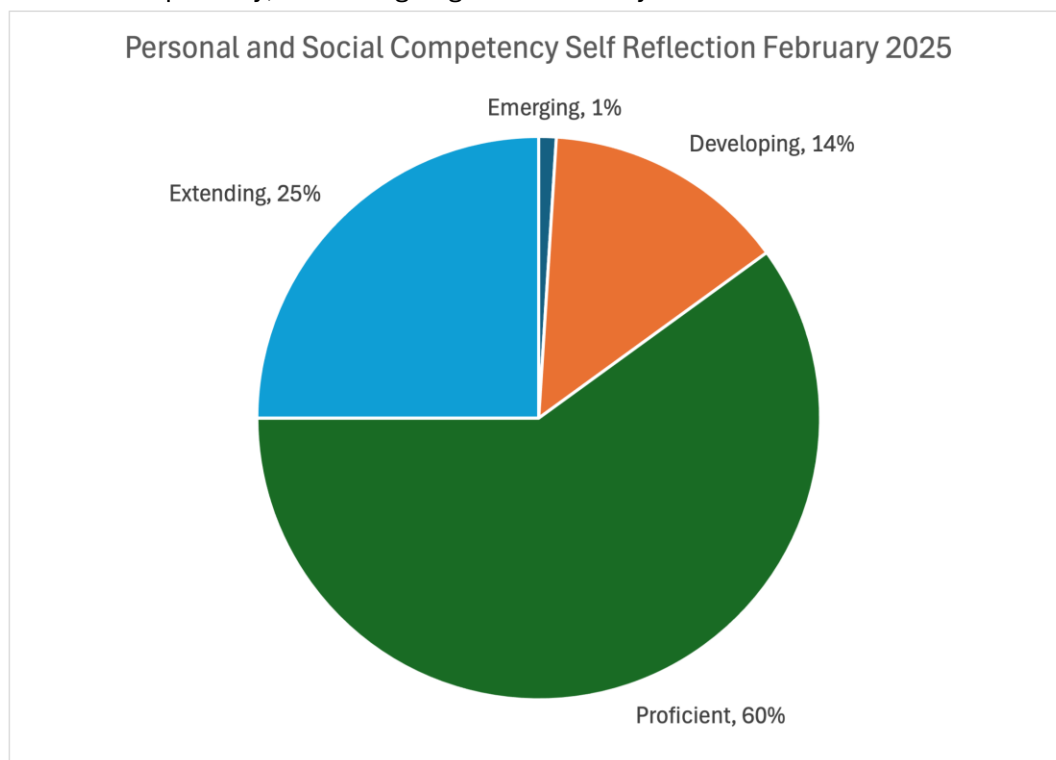
Overall, **classroom contexts**—assignments, discussions, group projects, labs—**play a central role** in revealing how students perceive their thinking. Those who rate themselves higher typically describe using multiple strategies and tackling more challenging tasks with confidence, while those rating themselves lower highlight the gaps, struggles, or lack of challenging opportunities that keep them from feeling fully competent.

Personal and Social Competency

The Personal and Social Competency is described as the set of abilities that relate to students' identity in the world, both as individuals and as members of their community and society. Personal and social competency encompasses what students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world.

Students were asked to reflect on their previous term and think about how they were developing in terms of their Personal and Social Competency. They were asked to describe their current level, based on the following criteria:

- **Emerging** - I am not currently developing or demonstrating my Personal and Social Competency, I have work to do in this area.
- **Developing** - Although I am developing or demonstrating my Personal and Social Competency somewhat, I could do more in this area.
- **Proficient** - I am consistently developing and demonstrating my Personal and Social Competency at school.
- **Extending** - I am consistently developing and demonstrating my Personal and Social Competency, and I am going above and beyond in this area.



As you can see, 85% of students described themselves as proficient (60%) or extending (25%). Also, 15% described themselves as developing (14%) or emerging (1%) in this competency.

Students were then asked to explain why they described themselves at the level above. They could use examples of tasks, units, projects or performances that they have done in school this semester, that demonstrate the Personal and Social Competency level they gave in their self-reflection.

Below is a thematic summary of the reasons students give for demonstrating their Personal and Social Competency in school, with direct quotes illustrating each theme. These excerpts come

directly from the students' own words, highlighting the day-to-day examples in class or at school that reveal their personal and social growth.

1. Forming and Sustaining Friendships

A common reason students cite is their ability to make friends easily and maintain positive relationships:

- *"I have lot of friends and try to be inclusive and nice."*
- *"I have lots of friends and I feel like I'm a trusted friend among most of them."*
- *"I met new people... learned about where some exchange students are from and the differences between here and where they live."*
- *"I can make friends pretty easily."*

In the classroom, friendships often translate into successful group work or help with navigating new social contexts.

2. Collaboration and Group Work

Many students point to specific in-class tasks—projects, discussions, labs—where they see their social competence at play:

- *"I can work well with others in small and large groups."*
- *"When needing to do my work I am able to socialize well and engage with other students."*
- *"I use my personal and social skills when helping others with class projects and assignments."*
- *"I described myself as proficient... because I can collaborate well with other people to learn more about various subjects."*

They see communication, listening, and team-building as key parts of their success in these group settings.

3. Open-Mindedness and Empathy

Students mention respecting differences and caring for peers' well-being:

- *"I am always thinking about my purpose in the world, and strive to understand my peers and surroundings. I'm pretty good at caring about myself and others."*
- *"I strive to be nice to peers and help people learn what I know."*
- *"I have been able to understand other cultures and keep an open mind to different things."*
- *"When someone feels bad... I become empathetic and try to comfort them as much as possible."*

They often reference being open to new ideas, supportive of classmates, and respectful of differences (cultural or personal).

4. Self-Awareness and Personal Growth

Many see school as an environment to learn more about themselves, set goals, and reflect on identity:

- *“I am always wanting to learn more about myself in school... for example in my CLC 11, I did a lot [of] assessments related to who I was and what I wanted to do in my future.”*
- *“I am carving my own path as a student by expressing my true self, respecting others, and working towards personal and academic success.”*
- *“I think my personal and social competency is at a proficient level... I still have a lot to learn about how to thrive individually in school.”*
- *“I am constantly changing and improving/developing in my own identity.”*

Some also highlight the challenges in this process—dealing with social anxiety or uncertainty:

- *“I’m struggling badly on who I am... it’s extremely difficult to talk to others.”*
- *“I have trouble talking to people I’m not comfortable around.”*

5. Communication Skills

Students repeatedly mention being able to talk, listen, and connect with others (teachers, peers, community):

- *“I talk to new people in class and am social in group projects.”*
- *“I am almost always communicating socially with friends and teachers alike... in the classroom as well as outside of it.”*
- *“I show proficient personal and social skills because I am able to communicate with others as well as listen to peers and teachers.”*
- *“In my classes I’m excited to work with students I have not yet interacted with a lot because I can learn a lot.”*

Even those who identify as shy see communication efforts at school as central to improving their social competency.

6. Leadership and Helping Others

Several students share how they take initiative or provide support to classmates:

- *“I’m a really good [leader] at leading groups.”*
- *“I strive to be nice to peers and help people learn what I know (hence signing up as a peer tutor).”*
- *“In my math class, I help others and make sure people understand what I am doing in each problem. I usually take the lead.”*
- *“I took a class called ‘Care Economy,’ which focused on our personal and social abilities to care for others.”*

They see themselves facilitating group discussions, tutoring, or being a supportive teammate.

7. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Many students also mention struggles:

- *“Sometimes I’m not very social with people I don’t know very well.”*
- *“I need to improve my social skills.”*
- *“I’m bad at asking for help and don’t like talking that much.”*

- *“I tend forget to drink water or eat when in the midst of school projects... I believe I have surrounded myself with people I can support, but I am also sometimes stressed.”*

Others mention needing more confidence to speak up in class or manage personal stress/anxiety. They see these issues as a work in progress but remain hopeful about improving.

8. School as a Community Context

Finally, students consistently describe school—with its clubs, group projects, various classes, teachers, and classmates—as the place where they practice personal and social skills daily:

- *“I have come out of my shell this year and met new people, learned about where some exchange students are from.”*
- *“Working in groups in Spanish class... collaborating in GISPA music to make arrangements.”*
- *“I talk to a lot of people every day and try to work with them in my classes.”*

They credit changing seat assignments, extracurricular activities, and peer interactions for giving them opportunities to expand socially and personally.

Key Takeaways

Friendships & Collaboration: Students often judge their personal/social growth by how easily they form friendships and collaborate on class projects.

Open-Mindedness & Empathy: Many pride themselves on supporting peers, recognizing cultural differences, and being inclusive.

Self-Awareness & Goal-Setting: School assignments like CLC (Career-Life Connections) or reflective projects help them explore who they are and what they want.

Communication & Leadership: Whether shy or outgoing, students value strong communication skills and mention leading groups or helping others.

Challenges: Social anxiety, shyness, or not knowing how to engage remain hurdles for some. They see these as areas where they want to keep improving.

In sum, students broadly identify **positive relationships, collaboration, self-awareness, empathy, and communication** as essential elements of their personal and social competency.

They cite **class discussions, group work, extracurriculars, and teacher/peer relationships** as key drivers in building these skills.

Next, we looked at these Personal and Social Competency responses in another way, and asked what are the differences between those that describe themselves as Extending vs Proficient vs Developing vs Emerging?

Below is a thematic overview of students’ reasons for rating themselves Proficient or Extending (doing well) versus Developing or Emerging (lower self-assessment) in their Personal and Social

Competency. The Personal and Social Competency involves how students see themselves as part of a community, how they form relationships, and how they care for themselves and others.

1. Students Who Rate Themselves Proficient or Extending

Students in this group generally highlight strong social connections, self-awareness, and active involvement in school communities.

A. Positive Social Skills and Friendships

- *“I have lot of friends and try to be inclusive and nice.”*
- *“I am always wanting to learn more about myself in school... did a lot of assessments related to who I was and what I wanted to do in my future.”*
- *“I talk to new people in class and am social in group projects.”*
- *“I work very well in groups, and I think my ability to relate to others and take leadership... is proof of my extending rating.”*

Key Behaviors:

- Making new friends easily, working well on group assignments, and enjoying class discussions.
- Being open-minded: “I’ve been able to understand other cultures and keep an open mind.”
- Seeking ways to help peers: tutoring, leading projects, or checking in with classmates.

B. Confidence & Self-Awareness

- *“I believe I am able to create good relationships with students at school and work with others.”*
- *“I’m a social fella... I am proficient at speaking to new people and I know how to keep a social life.”*
- *“I can identify how I feel and take action accordingly...I am able to sympathize and empathize.”*

Often, these students mention knowing themselves well and being comfortable in social scenarios. They describe an ability to balance personal needs with caring for others.

C. Classroom or School Contexts

- Group projects (e.g., social studies, language classes, project-based courses like GISPA music or “Care Economy”).
- Peer tutoring or volunteering to help classmates.
- Seat-rotation strategies that promote meeting new people and building diverse friendships.
- Reflective assignments in classes like CLC 11 or journaling about identity and community.

In many cases, they see regular communication, group discussions, and extracurricular involvement as opportunities to demonstrate and refine their personal and social competence.

2. Students Who Rate Themselves Developing or Emerging

Those who self-assess as “Developing” or “Emerging” reference shyness, social anxiety, or uncertainty about identity. They often want to improve but feel barriers to deeper engagement.

A. Hesitation, Anxiety, and Limited Social Interaction

- *“I have not made any new friends... But I feel more confident in myself.”*
- *“I don’t talk to many people in my classes but when I need help I talk to the teacher.”*
- *“I’m still a bit nervous to raise my hand in class to answer a question.”*
- *“I hate being social.”*
- *“I am not looking for opportunities to improve my social competency.”*

Some have clinical or diagnosed anxiety or feel generally uncomfortable in large group settings. They note difficulties speaking up, making new connections, or stepping out of their comfort zones.

B. Partial Progress and Desire to Improve

- *“I am always developing.”*
- *“I think I could be more social with people instead of being quiet.”*
- *“I’m not always the most social naturally, but I try to meet new people.”*

They see themselves on a path to more confidence—some even mention specific actions like approaching teachers or joining small groups to build their social skills.

C. Classroom Context

These students often mention group projects or discussions that are challenging due to shyness. They cite being slow to reach out for help, even though they might have strong opinions or knowledge.

Some reference stress or anxiety overshadowing their social engagement, leading them to avoid deeper interactions.

3. Highlights of Classroom or School Experiences Affecting These Ratings

Across all levels, students mention key experiences that shape their personal and social development:

Group Projects & Class Discussions:

- Students with higher self-assessments often take leadership roles or actively contribute; those developing often hesitate or communicate less.

Peer Connections & Making Friends:

- Proficient/Extending: Freedoms in seat arrangement, extracurriculars, and clubs help them connect widely.
- Developing/Emerging: Worry about fitting in or speaking up; prefer smaller circles or struggle with large-group dynamics.

Self-Reflective Assignments & Courses (e.g., CLC 11, “Care Economy”):

- Higher-rated students find these helpful for exploring identity and expanding empathy.
- Lower-rated students sometimes mention these classes but remain uncertain how to incorporate the insights into daily social interactions.

Teacher Support & Encouragement:

- Students often refer to teachers who facilitate open discussions, give feedback on group work, or arrange ice-breaker activities to help them bond.

4. Differences Between “Doing Well” vs. “Doing Less Well”**Confidence & Engagement:**

- Proficient/Extending: Show active engagement, highlight their successful friendships, group leadership, empathy, or have a strong sense of identity. They see themselves as continually improving but largely comfortable.
- Developing/Emerging: Identify shyness, discomfort, or lack of engagement. They know they need more interaction or confidence but struggle with social barriers or motivation.

Self-Awareness & Reflection:

- Higher rating students often talk about regular reflection on their needs, goals, and relationships.
- Lower rating students might reflect on their struggles but are less sure how to address them.

Willingness to Seek or Offer Help:

- Proficient/Extending commonly mention helping classmates, peer tutoring, or talking to teachers.
- Developing/Emerging frequently mention avoidance of help or discomfort initiating contact with teachers or peers.

5. Concluding Takeaways

Proficient/Extending students generally describe confidence in group interactions and comfort in forming or leading social connections. They highlight empathy, leadership, and a sense of purpose or identity, often citing class projects, extracurricular involvement, and teacher encouragement as drivers of their social growth.

Developing/Emerging students tend to note social anxiety, fear of judgment, or lack of active effort as barriers. They sometimes express a desire to improve (e.g., talking more, making new friends, joining clubs) but feel unsure or hesitant about taking these steps.

School itself provides a **crucial environment**—through courses, daily group tasks, teacher-student relationships, and peer interactions—where personal and social competencies can be either expanded (for confident students) or remain underdeveloped (for those overwhelmed by social anxiety or uncertainty).

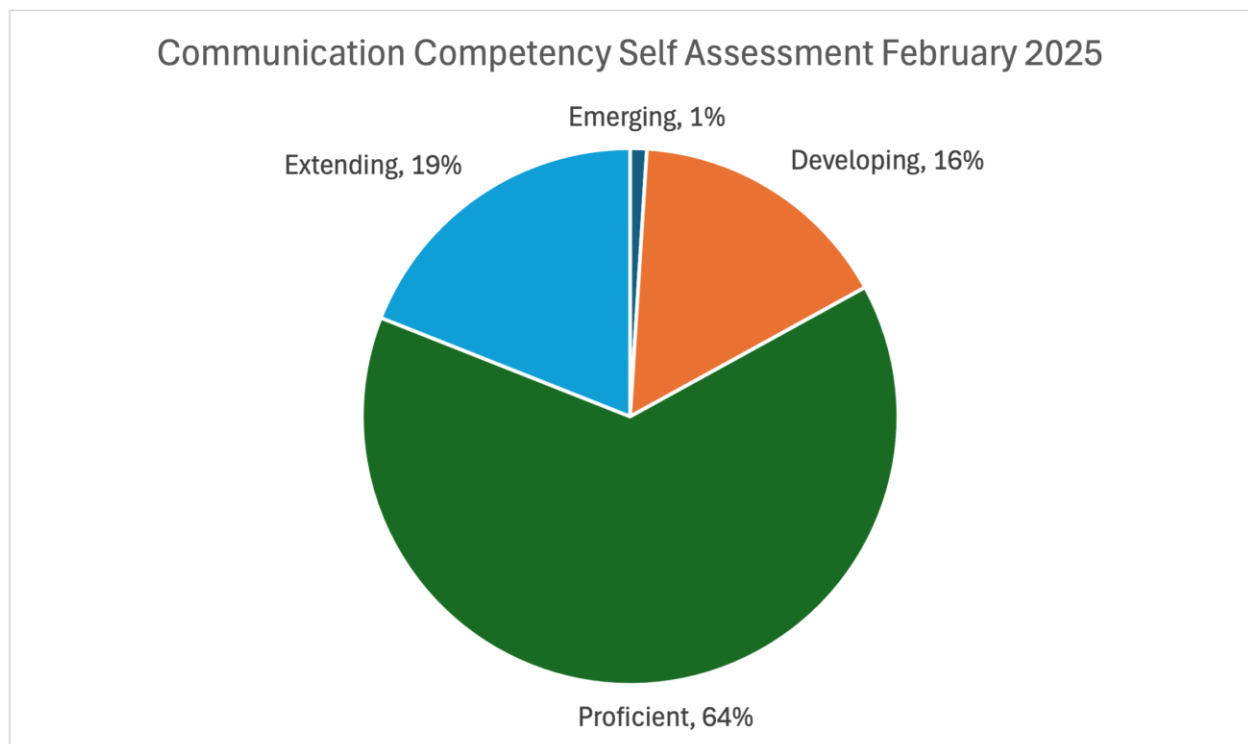
Communication Competency

The Communication Competency is described encompassing the knowledge, skills, processes and dispositions we associate with interactions with others.

Through their communication, students acquire, develop and transform ideas and information, and make connections with others to share their ideas, express their individuality, further their learning, and get things done. The Communication Competency is fundamental to finding satisfaction, purpose and joy.

Students were asked to reflect on their previous term and think about how they were developing in terms of their Communication Competency. They were asked to describe their current level, based on the following criteria:

- **Emerging** - I am not currently developing or demonstrating my Thinking Competency, I have work to do in this area.
- **Developing** - Although I am developing or demonstrating my Thinking Competency somewhat, I could do more in this area.
- **Proficient** - I am consistently developing and demonstrating my Thinking Competency at school.
- **Extending** - I am consistently developing and demonstrating my Thinking Competency, and I am going above and beyond in this area.



As you can see, 83% of students described themselves as proficient (64%) or extending (19%). Also, 17% described themselves as developing (16%) or emerging (1%) in this competency.

Students were then asked to explain why they described themselves at the level above. They could use examples of tasks, units, projects or performances that they have done in school this semester, that demonstrate the Communication Competency level they gave in their self-reflection.

Below is a thematic summary of the most common reasons students give for why they believe they are demonstrating the Communication Competency at school, along with direct quotes (in italics) that illustrate their experience. The Communication Competency includes knowledge, skills, and dispositions we associate with interacting with others—students mention ways they share ideas, clarify their thinking, ask for help, and coordinate with peers and teachers.

1. Seeking Help and Asking Questions

Many students emphasize that reaching out for help or clarifying instructions is central to their growth:

- *“My communication has been very good lately. I reach out when I am struggling and ask questions in class.”*
- *“I ask for help all the time when I don’t get what I’m doing.”*
- *“When I have a question I can ask it freely without worry.”*

They see improvement when they actively email teachers, stay after class, or speak up in class to ensure understanding.

2. Collaboration and Group Projects

Students frequently cite cooperative assignments as prime evidence of their communication skills:

- *“I work well in group projects and contribute fairly.”*
- *“I am very good at sharing my understanding of learning with my peers and my instructors.”*
- *“In group projects and class discussions I love to share my ideas and build off of others.”*

They mention coordinating tasks, dividing responsibilities, or brainstorming effectively as signs of successful communication.

3. Comfortable Speaking with Teachers and Classmates

A number of students highlight being able to speak confidently to teachers or peers:

- *“I can communicate when I need help with work or a project.”*
- *“I am very capable of working and communicating my ideas with others. I excel at leading a team.”*
- *“I am proficient because... in class, I can talk to the teacher or my peers easily.”*

These comments often reference oral communication—raising hands in class, leading or joining discussions, and even presenting ideas to the entire class.

4. Self-Expression and Written Communication

Another common theme is expressing ideas clearly in writing or other media:

- *“I think I am proficient in my communication as shown by my strong essay writing skills.”*

- *“I am able to clearly communicate my thoughts and opinions through verbal and written communication.”*
- *“Sharing my thoughts with my teachers, especially in journaling or reflection assignments, helps me express my individuality.”*

They point to essays, reflections, email exchanges with teachers, or online discussions as demonstrating their written communication competency.

5. Challenges with Speaking or Shyness

Several students describe struggles with shyness or anxiety while still trying to develop stronger communication:

- *“I’m awful at communicating to teachers; it’s hard for me to ask for help.”*
- *“I’m not a great communicator to people I don’t know... I struggle to say no.”*
- *“When I speak in front of a large group, I get extremely nervous.”*

They recognize communication’s importance but note fear of judgment or discomfort as obstacles to overcome.

6. Clear, Direct, and Honest Communication

Some students highlight frankness or honesty as a key aspect of their communication:

- *“I say what’s on my mind... I’m usually upfront about my feelings.”*
- *“I have no problem telling teachers if something is wrong.”*
- *“I prioritize communication in all my relationships... I’m very good at listening to others.”*

They see directness, empathy, and active listening as core elements of strong communication.

7. Bilingual or Multilingual Abilities

A few note that speaking multiple languages or being in French Immersion gives them extra practice:

“I’m in French immersion, so I can speak in two languages.”

“I communicate in another language all the time in the moment.”

They see learning or using multiple languages as part of broadening their communication competency.

8. Classroom Context and Activities

Students frequently tie their communication skills to school activities such as:

Presentations:

- Practicing public speaking, explaining ideas to the class.
- Group or Partner Work:
- Sharing tasks, brainstorming, problem-solving together.
- Extracurriculars:
- Citing experiences in clubs, GISPA music, theatre, leadership groups, or sports teams as places to refine communication.

- Written Assignments & Reflections:
- Emailing teachers, writing essays or reflection pieces (e.g. in Care Economy, English, or CLC).

Key Takeaways

Help-Seeking: Many highlight that asking for help is a strong indicator of their communication growth.

Teamwork & Project Collaboration: Coordinating with peers on class projects is a major reason they believe they're communicating effectively.

Comfort with Teachers: Students mention emailing teachers, raising their hand in class, or having 1-on-1 conversations as core evidence of their communication competency.

Writing & Presenting: Some point to strong writing skills (essays, journaling) or presentation abilities (class presentations, leadership roles) as hallmark signs.

Overcoming Shyness: Others know they need to speak up more or manage anxiety but recognize that the classroom environment can help them gradually improve.

In short, students who say they are doing well with their Communication Competency tend to cite active class participation, group projects, teacher interactions, and an overall willingness to share their ideas—while those working on it note shyness, anxiety, or hesitation but still aim to improve.

Next, we looked at these responses about Communication Competency in another way, and asked what are the differences between those that describe themselves as Extending vs Proficient vs Developing vs Emerging?

Below is a thematic summary of students' reasons for rating themselves Extending/Proficient (doing well) versus Developing/Emerging (feeling they could do more) on the Communication Competency. The Communication Competency centers on how students interact with others to share ideas, clarify thinking, collaborate, and build connections in class and beyond.

1. Extending or Proficient: "Doing Well"

Students who self-assess as Extending or Proficient commonly mention strong class participation, clear communication with teachers, and effective collaboration on group tasks. They typically feel confident expressing ideas both verbally and in writing.

A. Active Help-Seeking & Teacher Interaction

- *"I reach out when I am struggling and ask questions in class."*
- *"I told my teacher when I need help or something."*
- *"I think my communication is extending because I communicate really well to teachers, friends, and family...it helps with my learning to keep communicating."*

They see regular conversations, asking clarifying questions, and emailing teachers as key to their success.

B. Confidence in Group Work & Peer Collaboration

- *“I am almost always communicating with friends and teachers alike. This takes place in the classroom as well as outside it.”*
- *“I am very capable of working and communicating my ideas with others. I excel at leading a team in discussion and problem solving verbally.”*
- *“In group projects and class discussions, I love to share my ideas and build off others’ ideas as well.”*

Team projects and discussion activities provide evidence of good listening, leading, or coordinating with classmates.

C. Self-Expression and Sharing Ideas

- *“I am able to what how I am feeling even in uncomfortable situations.”*
- *“I’m very good at communication by saying how I feel.”*
- *“I can easily communicate my thoughts to teachers and peers in school.”*

They highlight being comfortable articulating their feelings or opinions and giving feedback. This often extends to written skills (e.g., essays, emails) as well.

D. Examples from Classes

- Presentations or IDS updates in classes like English, math, Spanish, or Care Economy.
- Group labs or projects in science and engineering that require coordination.
- Daily check-ins with teachers about missed work or clarifications.

Key Qualities: Confidence, clarity, seeking help when needed, and open verbal or written communication.

2. Developing or Emerging: “Could Do More”

Those who rate themselves lower often mention anxiety, shyness, or hesitancy about speaking up in class. They see themselves struggling to initiate conversations or ask for help.

A. Anxiety / Shyness in Speaking

- *“I’m awful at communicating to teachers; it’s hard for me to ask for help.”*
- *“I’m too shy to ask for help when I need it.”*
- *“When I speak in front of a lot of strangers in a quiet environment, I get extremely nervous.”*

They want to communicate more but feel apprehension about public speaking or approaching teachers.

B. Limited Engagement or Preference for Small Circles

- *“I only talked with the same guy in every class...didn’t have opportunity to communicate with others.”*
- *“I’m pretty quiet, but I still communicate in class and engage.”*

- *“I could put more effort into this, but I prefer not to sometimes.”*

Some prefer sticking to friends or avoiding big group interactions, acknowledging they could stretch themselves further.

C. Difficulty Initiating Help or Conversations

- *“I don’t do well with communicating with teachers, but I do my best.”*
- *“I could ask for more help, but I also want to figure it out before I ask.”*
- *“Most of the time I can communicate well, but sometimes I can be inconsistent and make mistakes.”*

They often recognize that if they overcame reluctance, they’d see better results in class.

D. Examples from Classes

- Avoiding asking questions in front of classmates.
- Feeling overlooked in group projects because they “don’t speak up.”
- Shyness in presentations, leading to nervousness or incomplete explanations.

Key Themes: Inhibition, reluctance to ask for help, and wanting to improve but feeling held back by social or personal barriers.

3. Classroom Experiences and Their Impact

Students at all levels reference group projects, teacher check-ins, and daily interactions as key opportunities to practice or reveal communication skills. For the more confident students, these tasks affirm their abilities. For those less confident, they serve as a push to speak up or a reminder of their struggles.

Group Tasks:

- Proficient/Extending students step up to organize and lead, or comfortably share ideas.
- Developing/Emerging might feel overshadowed or anxious about their contributions.

Asking for Help:

- Proficient/Extending see teacher communication (via email or in person) as natural.
- Developing/Emerging often note awkwardness or fear about reaching out.

Written vs. Oral Expression:

- Some highlight strong writing (essays, journaling) as a safer way to express themselves.
- Others rely on verbal skills to collaborate effectively.

4. Notable Differences

Confidence vs. Hesitation: Those at Proficient/Extending typically feel comfortable or even enjoy talking with teachers and peers, while Developing/Emerging are more prone to social anxiety or self-consciousness.

Help-Seeking Behavior: Higher-rated students mention openly emailing or talking with teachers. Lower-rated students “could do more” but hold back out of fear or desire to “figure it out alone.”

Leadership vs. Minimal Engagement: Extending students often mention leading discussions or group projects. Developing/Emerging sometimes remain quiet or only talk with one trusted friend.

5. Summary of Themes

Communication as Collaboration: Students doing well enjoy sharing ideas in group settings, leading teams, or actively voicing opinions in class.

Help and Questions: Confident communicators ask teachers or peers for help without hesitation, whereas those feeling less confident avoid it.

Classroom Opportunities: Presentations, group assignments, daily discussions, or emailing teachers are core ways they demonstrate or practice communication.

Personal Style and Comfort: Some rely on writing or small-group talk, while others prefer open class discussions. Anxiety or shyness is a key barrier for lower-rated students.

Overall, Proficient/Extending students see themselves as consistent, effective communicators who thrive in collaborative tasks. Meanwhile, Developing/Emerging students recognize communication's importance but feel limited by shyness, lack of initiative, or fear of judgment. They want to improve by speaking up more, asking for help, and practicing communication in supportive classroom contexts.

Student Goal Setting

Lastly, students were asked to set a goal in one of the competency areas. Below is a thematic summary of the students' responses for each of the three competency areas (Thinking, Personal and Social, and Communication). Direct quotes from their self-reported goals back up these themes. Finally, you will find an example of how you might set one personal goal (choosing an area to focus on) and describe how you could achieve it by the end of the semester.

1. Thinking Competency: Themes and Quotes

Major Themes

Deeper Understanding & Critical Thinking: Many students want to go beyond surface-level knowledge in class and *"think more about everything."*

Applying Ideas to Real Life: Some mention wanting to connect classroom material to everyday life or the real world: *"I would like to work on deeper thinking and reflecting on topics we are learning. Thinking about the ways things work and how they apply to everyday life."*

Problem-Solving & Creativity: A number want to *"expand [their] range and thought process"* and solve tough questions more creatively.

Improved Focus & Studying: Others talk about being “*more aware of the subject I’m taught,*” or “*think before I do something,*” suggesting they want to reduce impulsive or distracted behavior in class.

Sample Student Quotes

- “*I want to be able to expand my range and thought process to work through tough questions.*”
- “*I would like to think more and be smarter.*”
- “*I believe that deeper learning is a skill... my goal is to be more organized with my homework so that I’m giving myself enough time to think.*”
- “*I want to do my homework and get my grades up a little.*”

2. Personal and Social Competency: Themes and Quotes

Major Themes

Making New Friends & Being More Social: A central goal is “*getting more friends*” or “*making new connections.*”

Confidence & Self-Care: Some want to focus on self-confidence and not get overwhelmed by perfectionism or social anxiety.

Speaking Up More: Even students who feel they already have some social skills mention wanting to be “*more social by talking and meeting new people.*”

Balancing Personal Well-Being: Some highlight wanting to “*take better care of myself*” or “*reduce stress*” while improving social connections.

Sample Student Quotes

- “*I would like to be more social by talking and meeting new people.*”
- “*I want to make more friends and branch out more socially.*”
- “*My goal is to be more of a leader in classes where I’m very comfortable with my peers.*”
- “*I have become more social, but I would like to get better.*”

3. Communication Competency: Themes and Quotes

Major Themes

Asking Teachers & Peers for Help: Many mention wanting to email teachers more often or feel more comfortable raising their hands in class: “*I want to talk to my teachers for help more.*”

Confidence in Speaking or Presenting: Overcoming shyness or fear of presenting in front of the class. “*I would like to be more comfortable talking in front of the class/large groups of people.*”

Group Work & Collaboration: Students aim to get better at “*taking a leadership role*” or communicating with group members in projects.

Clear Self-Expression: Some want to “*express [themselves] better*” so they can share ideas or feelings with friends and teachers more effectively.

Sample Student Quotes

- “*I want to improve my communication skills with the students and teachers... so they can get a better understanding of who I am.*”
- “*Be more open to group projects, i.e., talking more and taking a leadership role.*”
- “*I would like to ask more questions in class to further develop my learning.*”
- “*I want to communicate my thoughts in a more concise manner.*”

In Summary

Thinking: Students want to think more deeply, be more focused, and connect learning to real life.

Personal and Social: Common goals involve making new friends, increasing confidence, and balancing self-care.

Communication: Students aim to ask more questions, speak up in groups, and build comfort in public or written expression.