

# Performance Assessment Profile: Envision Schools

By Anna Maier

## Overview

Envision Education runs three small, high-performing urban public schools serving grades 6–12 in California’s San Francisco Bay Area. These include **City Arts & Technology High School** in San Francisco, **Envision Academy of Arts & Technology** in Oakland, and **Impact Academy of Arts & Technology** in Hayward. All students complete the A–G series of Common Core-aligned courses that are required for them to attend a four-year public university in California. The curriculum emphasizes core academic competencies, including inquiry, analysis, research, and creative expression. Envision schools also emphasize project-based learning that challenges students to use 21st-century leadership skills such as communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective project completion.

Students graduate, in part, by completing a portfolio of evidence that they have mastered these skills. The Portfolio Defense Model, detailed below, allows for rich application of these skills. Envision Education’s approach has been successful. The California Department of Education designated City Arts & Technology High School and Envision Academy of Arts & Technology as Gold Ribbon Schools in 2015.

**Table 1: Envision Schools at a Glance (2015–16)**

	City Arts & Technology High	Envision Academy	Impact Academy
<b>Student Enrollment</b>	340	407	462
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 58% Latino</li> <li>• 21% African American</li> <li>• 9% Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander</li> <li>• 5% White</li> <li>• 7% Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% Latino</li> <li>• 38% African American</li> <li>• 3% Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander</li> <li>• 3% White</li> <li>• 5% Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 67% Latino</li> <li>• 13% African American</li> <li>• 12% Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander</li> <li>• 5% White</li> <li>• 3% Other</li> </ul>
<b>Low-Income Students<sup>i</sup></b>	63%	47%	72%
<b>English Learners<sup>ii</sup></b>	11%	9%	6%

<sup>i</sup> Percent of students who qualified for a free or reduced-price meal in 2014–15.

<sup>ii</sup> Does not include English Learners who have been reclassified as “fluent English proficient.”

Source: California Department of Education DataQuest.

In addition to its three schools, Envision Education operates a consultancy division, created in 2010, called Envision Learning Partners (ELP). ELP works with schools and districts throughout California and across the country to transform students’ educational experiences. ELP’s evaluation, training, and

professional development activities have reached more than 800 teachers and leaders in more than 20 school networks, impacting the learning of at least 82,500 students. The opportunity to enhance deeper learning through performance assessment activities is a key focal point of this work.

## Performance Assessment at Envision Schools

Every Envision student participates in Envision’s [Portfolio Defense Model](#) in order to graduate. In order to demonstrate mastery of specific leadership competencies, high school seniors gather a selection of their most rigorous work from different subject areas and present the academic content—along with reflections on their academic growth and their plans for success after high school—to a panel of educators and peers who respond with questions they must answer in their portfolio defense. Most of the pieces presented have been reviewed and revised—sometimes several times—to meet the high standard expected for a portfolio entry. High school sophomores also participate in a “benchmark” portfolio presentation and defense. This process promotes critical thinking and academic rigor, and helps prepare students for life after high school. Students who prepare for college in this system are well-equipped to tackle college-level work, having repeatedly practiced the academic and cognitive skills necessary in higher education.

### How the System Works

Envision’s Deeper Learning Performance Assessment System starts in the classroom. Every year, students complete one or two performance assessment tasks in each class—sophisticated projects that showcase learning and growth. Teachers use content and grade-level-specific rubrics to certify student work as proficient or advanced. Students can then select from a variety of certified projects, known as artifacts, when constructing their portfolio of work and preparing their defense presentation.

### What Is a Performance Assessment Task?

Performance assessment tasks at Envision schools require students to show their mastery of the academic content, connect learning across areas of study, demonstrate leadership skills such as collaboration and communication, and reflect on their successes and areas for growth.

For example, a 10th-grade student in an art class at City Arts & Technology High School in San Francisco created a large public mural with personally meaningful images. In doing so, she learned about different artistic conventions, connected the school project to her current interests, focused on the symbolism underlying her images, thought about how to apply a similar analytic strategy when reading novels in her English class, and reflected on her ability to complete large projects effectively.

In 12th grade, a City Arts & Technology student conducted a literary analysis of *Fahrenheit 451*. In preparation for a final essay deconstructing the themes of the novel, she took careful note of key quotes and plot points, and engaged in a series of timed writing activities to address literary elements such as character development. Her final essay outlined the ways in which an overly technocratic society can lead to personal and societal misfortune. The student drew upon textual evidence, Cold War knowledge, and reflections upon her own engagement with technology in making this argument.

Source: Site visit to City Arts & Technology High School

### **Work Products**

Students assemble two portfolios during their time in an Envision school. The Benchmark Portfolio in 10th grade determines whether students are ready to join the “upper house” (11th/12th grade). It includes the following elements:

- Four certified artifacts—of which the student orally defends three. The four artifacts represent each of the core academic competencies (inquiry, analysis, research, and creative expression). One artifact must cover the humanities (English or social studies), and another must cover science or math.
- A written reflection accompanying each artifact on how the student used 21st-century leadership skills and grew as a learner. Together, the reflections must represent all of the leadership skills (communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective project completion).
- A cover letter synthesizing the student’s mastery of the core academic competencies and 21st-century leadership skills, similar to a college admissions personal essay.
- A digital presentation of the work.

The College Success Portfolio in 12th grade is a graduation requirement for all Envision students, and is designed to showcase their readiness for college and a career. It includes the following elements:

- Five certified artifacts—of which the student orally defends three. The five artifacts represent each of the core academic competencies (including English/social studies and science/math), as well as a workplace learning internship experience that all students participate in during the second semester of both 11th and 12th grades.
- A written reflection accompanying each artifact on how the student used 21st-century leadership skills and grew as a learner. Together, the reflections must represent all of the leadership skills (communication, critical thinking, collaboration, and effective project completion). The workplace learning internship experience reflection cannot solely represent any of the leadership skills.
- A cover letter synthesizing the student’s mastery of the core academic competencies and 21st-century leadership skills, similar to a college admissions personal essay.
- A college- and career-readiness plan.
- A digital presentation of the work.

### **Portfolio Presentations**

After assembling their work, students deliver portfolio defense presentations as a final assessment. To do so, they develop a PowerPoint presentation to demonstrate their mastery of the academic content, show their ability to apply leadership skills to their work, and share their reflections on academic and personal growth. In 10th grade, students select three certified artifacts from 9th or 10th grade. They present an academic identity thesis that makes the claim that they are ready to advance to 11th grade, using their work and reflections as evidence (e.g., “I take my future seriously, and it shows in my work”). In 12th grade, students select three certified artifacts from 11th or 12th grade. They present a philosophy of education that makes the claim that they are ready for college and a career, using their work and reflections as evidence (e.g., “I have a strong skill set to use in college and my first adult job”). In both cases, the students’ claims are addressed and supported in their cover letters and used as an organizing principle of the portfolio presentation.

These are substantial presentations. In 12th grade, students typically present for 45 to 60 minutes, followed by 15 to 30 minutes of lively Q&A discussion with the audience. The defense is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge, and share their reflection and growth as a learner. For each artifact, the students first refer to their claim of academic readiness (the academic identity thesis or philosophy of education), and then demonstrate how their work supports the claim. This includes a detailed discussion of the academic content, including how it relates to broader social themes. The students also reflect on the learning process itself, including success and challenges encountered while working on the artifact, and how the assignment helped to spur their development of the 21st century leadership skills.

For both defense presentations, the panel is composed of the student’s advisor, another student, and one or two additional teachers, all of whom ask questions in order to delve deeper into the student’s knowledge and skills. The panel grades the presentation using a shared rubric. Other important people in the student’s life, such as friends or family members, are invited to be part of the audience and to support the presenter. Any member of the audience can ask questions, although only the official panel determines whether the student achieves proficiency and passes the defense (see below). See [here](#) for a full-length presentation video, and [here](#) for a full-length presentation divided into sections by artifact.

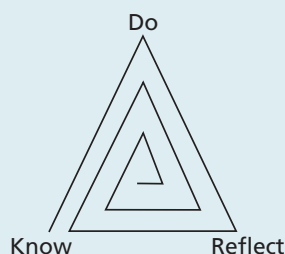
### What Is a Student Presentation Like?

At the Envision Academy of Arts & Technology in the heart of Oakland, California, a nervous but brave young Black woman presents a literary analysis of *The Kite Runner*—[a 12th-grade project]—to family, school and community members, and invited guests. Proud to display what she has learned over months of work, [she] deftly explains the metaphors in the novel using evidence from the text, while weaving in reflections on her own personal experiences. At just 17 years old, these already include transitions between several schools, the murder of her father, and an arrest for drug possession. After half an hour, [she] concludes to the cheers of her fellow students, teachers, family, and strangers in the room, and falls into the arms of her principal, filled with pride that she has completed this latest transition, and is officially the first in her family to finish high school and go on to college.

Source: National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2016). *What matters now: A new compact for teaching and learning—the evidence base*. Arlington, VA: p. 5. Retrieved October 20, 2016, from [http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/NCTAF\\_What-Matters-Now\\_The-Evidence-Base\\_hyperlinked.pdf](http://nctaf.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/NCTAF_What-Matters-Now_The-Evidence-Base_hyperlinked.pdf).

### Grading

Envision Education has a [graduate profile](#) that outlines what each graduating senior should know and be able to do. The rubrics that educators use to grade performance artifacts and portfolio defenses flow from this document. All grading materials employ a “whole child” perspective that emphasizes the “know, do, reflect” cycle (see graphic below).



A cycle of knowing, doing, and reflecting exists at each level of the portfolio experience. Ultimately, students build towards becoming a balanced graduate, who knows their academic subjects, shows what they can do through their competencies and leadership skills, and reflects on their learning in order to deepen their knowledge and skills. Within each of the competencies, students also cycle through knowing (learning content), doing (applying), and reflecting as they bring their artifact to proficiency.

Source: Envision Education Professional Development Materials, 2012

As teachers assign performance tasks in content area classes, they use content and grade-level-specific rubrics to certify student work as proficient or advanced. For example, this [12th-grade language arts rubric](#) is used for textual analysis artifacts where a student has read a text and written a paper analyzing the text. The teacher assigns a score of emerging, developing, proficient, or advanced on a range of academic domains. In this example, the domains include the argument, the evidence used to support the argument, the analysis of the evidence, the organization of the paper, the use of writing conventions, the students' ability to reflect on their learning, and describe how they can apply their knowledge in the future. A teacher can only certify an artifact if the student scores proficient or better on every scoring domain. Here is an example of different scoring levels for the Analysis domain on the 12th-grade language arts textual analysis:

	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
<b>Analysis:</b> <b>What is the indication that the student can analyze evidence?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates minimal understanding of text(s)</li> <li>• Summarizes but does not analyze or evaluate ideas or claims</li> <li>• Makes no reference to author's choices to support central ideas or claims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates basic understanding of text(s)</li> <li>• Summarizes and attempts to analyze the central ideas or claims</li> <li>• Briefly refers to author's choices (e.g., language use, literary/rhetorical devices, organization) that support central ideas or claims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates comprehensive understanding of text(s), including both explicit and inferred meanings</li> <li>• Analyzes the central ideas or sequence of events and their development over the course of the text(s)</li> <li>• Analyzes how author's choices (e.g., language use, literary/rhetorical devices, organization) support central ideas or claims</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates comprehensive and critical understanding of text(s), including both explicit and inferred meanings</li> <li>• Analyzes and evaluates complex ideas or sequence of events, and explains how individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text(s)</li> <li>• Analyzes how author's choices (e.g., language use, literary/rhetorical devices, organization) support central ideas or claims and the effectiveness of the text</li> </ul>

Once students have assembled a portfolio of artifacts, each of which is certified as proficient or advanced on all domains, they are ready to present and defend their complete portfolio. The defense process also employs a scoring rubric. Because this is such a meaningful presentation, two or three staff members will use the same rubric and align their scores in order to determine whether a student passes the portfolio defense. Again, each evaluator assigns a score of emerging, developing, proficient, or advanced on a range of domains, including:

- Mastery of knowledge: What does the student know?
- Application of knowledge: What can the student do?
- Metacognition: How reflective is the student?
- Presentation skills: What is the evidence that the student can give a formal presentation?
- Questions and comments: What is the evidence that the student can appropriately respond to spontaneous questions?

Again, students must achieve a score of proficient or better in each scoring domain in order to pass. Here is an example of different scoring levels for the Metacognition domain on the 12th-grade College Success portfolio rubric:

	Emerging	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
<b>Metacognition:</b> <b>How reflective is this student?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not allude to his/her growth, accomplishments, and successes</li> <li>• Somewhat acknowledges areas where future growth and/or cognitive growth and development are needed OR does not have a plan/strategy to manage their needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefly mentions his/her growth, accomplishments, and successes</li> <li>• Honestly acknowledges areas where future growth and/or cognitive growth and development are needed, and has a superficial plan/strategy to manage their needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes and discusses his/her growth, accomplishments, and successes.</li> <li>• Honestly acknowledges areas where future growth and/or cognitive growth and development are needed, and discusses a concrete plan/strategy to manage their needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition and discussion of his/her growth, accomplishments, and successes are thoroughly interwoven into presentation, and reflection of each artifact</li> <li>• Honestly acknowledges areas where future growth and/or cognitive growth and development are needed, and has evidence of a concrete plan/strategy to manage their needs</li> </ul>

**Revising**

There are many opportunities for students to revise their work throughout the portfolio process. They can work with a content area teacher to strengthen their work on a performance task in order to successfully certify it as a portfolio artifact. They are also required to re-present their portfolio defense if they do not pass the first time, since passing is an Envision graduation requirement. In fact, students and staff take the portfolio defense process seriously, and passing on the first try is not a given. About 30% of Envision students end up resubmitting their portfolio defenses. This is a design choice, not

a flaw. Part of the value of the revision process is learning how to constantly strive for better work and how to maintain resilience when encountering constructive criticism. In the case of a resubmit, students receive support from teachers and friends as they practice a revised presentation. They also get specific feedback from the rubric and evaluation notes on particular areas of their portfolio defense that need strengthening. An Envision staff member explains how they try to ensure the experience motivates students:

The attitude is very much “You can do better” and “You’re not there—yet. We know you can get there, and we’re here to help.”

### **School Instruction and Support**

The progression from the 10th-grade to the 12th-grade portfolio defense provides multiple opportunities for students to polish their presentation skills and strengthen the quality of their portfolio artifacts. Envision students frequently share their work, including informal presentations of small class projects, schoolwide speeches at community meetings, and exhibitions of interdisciplinary projects, where family and community members learn about a grade-level theme through student projects from different subject areas. These opportunities serve as stand-alone assessments of student learning and provide opportunities to practice for the portfolio defense.

In addition, classroom instruction practices explicitly focus on developing the skills that students will need in order to defend their work. Envision teachers focus on requiring students to justify their thinking when answering questions in each class—a simple “right” or “wrong” answer is not the goal. They also focus on accessing the deeper meaning in different subject areas, encouraging students to think about how a particular piece of knowledge can apply to other situations or disciplines.

Students also receive support from school structures that facilitate the performance assessment process. For example, they participate in a small-group advisory class that focuses on noncognitive content such as the 21st-century leadership skills. The advisory teacher provides time for students to develop and practice their portfolio presentations, and toward the end of the school year, Wednesdays become “coach days” for students to get feedback on their defense practice sessions. All Envision students also participate in a workplace learning internship experience in 11th and 12th grades, and often receive mentorship and support from their internship supervisor. Some supervisors even attend the College Success portfolio defense in 12th grade.

### **Calibration of Teacher Scoring**

Envision staff regularly participate in professional learning sessions devoted to scoring calibration, facilitated by deeper learning coaches from Envision Learning Partners. In these sessions, teachers observe a student’s practice defense, score the defense using the shared presentation rubric, and discuss how they scored the student on each domain. This process helps them hone in on and resolve any areas of disagreement in order to align their individual scoring approaches. A complementary activity employs a “standards in practice protocol,” where teachers come together to closely examine student work that has been certified proficient using a content and grade-level-specific rubric. In discussing the assignment, teachers consider what the student knows and can do based on their work. This exercise also provides an opportunity to consider the design of the assignment itself, including whether it elicited high-level thinking, and provided sufficient structure and support to guide student success. By delving into what it means for students to produce proficient work, teachers can score assignments more consistently and fine-tune their instruction to support successful outcomes.

Even with these ongoing professional learning activities, calibration of performance assessment scoring within and across schools requires constant effort. It takes time for new teachers to align their expectations of student work with colleagues when they first join an Envision school. Professional learning time is precious, and there are competing priorities for its use. There is no shortcut when it comes to calibrating teacher scoring—what it takes is frequent practice using student work samples and presentations. The upside is that these activities afford teachers a rich opportunity to examine student learning and deepen their instructional practice.

## How Students Benefit

While the portfolio defense process is not the only element of Envision’s academic program driving student success, it plays a central role in preparing students for college and beyond. This approach yields impressive outcomes.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) compared schools focused on deeper learning outcomes such as Envision’s core academic competencies and 21st-century leadership skills to traditional high schools with similar demographics.<sup>2</sup> This study included Envision schools in the deeper learning group. After statistically accounting for differences in observed student background characteristics such as race or income, the researchers found the following:

- On average, students in deeper learning schools scored higher on an international test (the OECD PISA-based Test for Schools) than similar students in traditional high schools. The international test assesses academic content knowledge and complex problem-solving skills in reading, mathematics, and science. Deeper learning students also scored higher on state-mandated language arts and mathematics tests.
- Students in deeper learning schools reported higher levels of collaboration skills, academic engagement, motivation to learn, and self-efficacy. However, student outcomes did not differ significantly for reported levels of perseverance, self-management, or creative thinking.
- Through summer 2014, students in deeper learning schools were more likely to graduate from high school within four years, and the graduation rate for students at deeper learning schools was approximately eight percentage points higher than the graduation rate for similar students in traditional high schools.
- As of fall 2014, students in deeper learning schools were more likely to enroll in postsecondary institutions than similar students in traditional high schools (53% vs. 50%). In particular, students who attended deeper learning schools were more likely to enroll in four-year institutions (22% vs. 18%) and in selective four-year institutions (9% vs. 7%).

Positive student outcomes are also evident in school-level data for Envision. In the first year of reporting for the new California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), Envision students generally performed close to or above the state average. Graduation and college access outcomes are particularly impressive. All Envision graduates complete the A–G coursework required for admission to the University of California or California State University system in California, compared to less than half of students statewide. Four-year graduation rates and college entrance rates also outpace state averages, which is particularly impressive given that Envision schools predominantly serve low-income students of color.



**Table 2: Envision Student Outcomes**

	City Arts & Tech High	Envision Academy	Impact Academy	State Average
<b>California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress</b> 2015–16	<b>11th Grade ELA:</b>	<b>11th Grade ELA:</b>	<b>11th Grade ELA:</b>	<b>11th Grade ELA:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 57% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 30% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 13% standard not met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 44% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 32% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 25% standard not met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 14% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 4% standard not met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 59% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 2% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 19% standard not met</li> </ul>
	<b>11th Grade Math:</b>	<b>11th Grade Math:</b>	<b>11th Grade Math:</b>	<b>11th Grade Math:</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 22% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 63% standard not met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 24% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 65% standard not met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 32% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 31% standard not met</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 36% standard met or exceeded</li> <li>• 32% standard nearly met</li> <li>• 31% standard not met</li> </ul>
<b>4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate</b> 2014–15	90.4%	90%	96%	82%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latino: 93%</li> <li>• African American: 92%</li> <li>• Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 75%<sup>i</sup></li> <li>• White: 88%<sup>i</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latino: 91%</li> <li>• African American: 88%</li> <li>• Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 100%<sup>i</sup></li> <li>• White: 100%<sup>i</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latino: 97%</li> <li>• African American: 100%<sup>i</sup></li> <li>• Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 93%</li> <li>• White: 100%<sup>i</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latino: 79%</li> <li>• African American: 71%</li> <li>• Asian, Filipino, or Pacific Islander: 92%</li> <li>• White: 88%</li> </ul>
<b>College Entrance Rate</b> 2008–2012	86% to 98% <sup>ii</sup>	Unknown	78% to 81% <sup>iii</sup>	74% <sup>iv</sup>
<b>A–G Course Requirements for UC/CSU Admission</b> 2014–15	100% of students met this requirement			43%
<b>College Persistence</b>	Envision reports that 90% of its graduates stay in college past their first year.			Unknown

<sup>i</sup> Ten or fewer students

<sup>ii</sup> Includes two- and four-year institutions, career training programs, and the military, for City Arts & Technology graduates 2008–2012. Lewis-Charp, H., & Law, T. (2014). *Student-centered learning: City Arts & Technology High School*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

<sup>iii</sup> Includes two- and four-year institutions only, for 2011 and 2012 Impact graduates. Cook-Harvey, C. M. (2014). *Student-centered learning: Impact Academy of Arts & Technology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

<sup>iv</sup> 2008–09 California high school graduates enrolled in any postsecondary institution, whether located inside or outside the state of California, within 16 months of their high school graduation.

Source: California Department of Education DataQuest.

Envision’s Deeper Learning Performance Assessment System offers students an opportunity to grow academically, but it develops more than just content mastery. Students take ownership of the portfolio process by selecting which certified artifacts they would like to include in the portfolio. One student might focus on art, science, and math, while another might choose social studies, English, and a workplace learning internship experience. The performance assessment process encourages students to build on their strengths, pursue their interests, and constantly push toward stronger academic skills and more expansive self-reflection—with the ultimate goal of ensuring students are ready for college and a career. The opportunity to consistently practice, present, revise, and reflect from 9th grade onward is particularly important for preparing Envision students to succeed in a college classroom or professional workplace, especially given the many low-income students, English learners, and first-generation college students that Envision serves. The revision process is at the heart of social-emotional learning. One Envision staff member explains:

The students who DON’T pass are the lucky ones. When they inevitably experience failure in college (as we all have), they know what to do and how to pick themselves up.

A student agrees:

Coming into this, I just saw it as another assignment. I don’t like to do a lot of revisions, but my advisor really shredded my presentation. My work met the standards on paper, but it was the bare minimum. I wasn’t really reflecting on what I was learning. Revising was stressful, but I really appreciate working closely with my advisor. I learned so much.

Ultimately, Envision students see the value in how this work prepares them for the real world. Another student explains:

The portfolio shows me my improvements. I’ve changed so much over the four years I’ve been here. It’s been a roller coaster at times, and seeing my progress makes me proud. I know this process prepares me for my future. My mom is in college, and she has to do presentations all the time.

Envision graduates concur that the portfolio process helps them succeed in college. An Impact Academy graduate says:

The way classes were structured [at Impact]—applied learning versus just tests—is more like what we do in college. We have lots of applied learning and projects, and I know how to do more than just throw up what we learned from the teacher. I know how to internalize.<sup>3</sup>

A City Arts & Technology High graduate adds:

I think that college success portfolio is really like the ultimate self-reflection, like where was I at point A, and where am I now at point B, and why am I now ready to go off and be a successful person? ... You’re spending four years of your life constantly reflecting and thinking about how you can make yourself better. And I think they’re trying to get us into the habit of that, so then when we go to college we’ll already be thinking like, “Okay, this is good, but for my next paper, how can I make this better? Or, this was great, but for my next class, this discussion, this presentation, how can I make it better?” And so I think they’re trying to get us into the habit.<sup>4</sup>

Envision’s Portfolio Defense Model prepares students to continually strive for their best work, to reflect upon their strengths and challenges inside and outside of the classroom, and to confidently present and defend their thinking. These skills are valuable in both a college and workplace setting, and leave students well-equipped to succeed upon graduating from an Envision school.

## Endnotes

- 1 See <http://www.envisionschools.org/impact/>.
- 2 American Institutes for Research (2016). *Study of Deeper Learning: Opportunities and Outcomes*. See <http://www.air.org/project/study-deeper-learning-opportunities-and-outcomes> for full suite of research.
- 3 Cook-Harvey, C. M. (2014). *Student-centered learning: Impact Academy of Arts & Technology*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, p. 28. <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/SCOPE-Student-Centered-Learning-Impact.pdf>.
- 4 Lewis-Charp, H., & Law, T. (2014). *Student-centered learning: City Arts & Technology High School*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, p. 26. [https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/student-centered-learning-city-arts-and-technology-high-school\\_0.pdf](https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/student-centered-learning-city-arts-and-technology-high-school_0.pdf).