



In 2020, Brownell Talbot partnered with Common Ground Collaborative (CGC), a non-profit organization committed to educating global citizens, in order to establish an agreed-upon foundation for which BT will move forward as a globally minded school. By joining CGC, BT became the only Nebraska school and one of the few North American schools in a network that includes the highest caliber schools around the globe, including International School of Brussels, Zurich International School, Jakarta International School, American Embassy School in New Delhi, United Nations International School, and International School of Bangkok.

At the core of CGC's work is the belief that there are six traits every human has in common and that you must appreciate and nurture each of these in order to be a globally minded citizen:

- **Purpose and balance.** We all seek meaning and purpose in our existence and we strive towards achieving balance in our lives.
- **Imagination and creativity.** We are all creators; we are all capable of imagining new futures and making them real.
- **Sustainability and systems.** We all share a duty of stewardship for the ecosystems we inhabit and to understand how they work.
- **Patterns and principles.** We all look for recurring patterns and enduring principles to help us make sense of things.
- **Stories and signals.** We are all storytellers; we all send messages to each other.
- **Individuals and groups.** We all seek personal identity; we all need a place to belong.



The purpose of BT's collaboration with CGC is not to adopt an off-the-shelf identity for how global education manifests at BT. Instead CGC has worked with the school to realize systems that are unique to BT and the school community. The first instance of this was in the creation of BT's portrait of a graduate, which used CGC's six commonalities as a foundation for discussions by the faculty and staff about BT's outcomes, which resulted in the identification of five competencies that are unique to BT graduates (*learn more about BT's portrait of a graduate on page 6*).

Once the portrait of a graduate was clearly defined, BT worked with CGC through workshops that included faculty, staff, and families to shape the common learning principles of Brownell Talbot and identify the pedagogical practices that support the principles of learning.

"The principles of learning are foundational to building a culture that requires and expects an 'all hands on deck' approach from faculty and staff, as well as families," said Head of School Kristi Gibbs. "The principles and related practices guide every member of our community in how they can support learning that fosters global citizenship."

The focus is now on refining the school's curriculum so it better aligns with the agreed-upon principles and what BT's stakeholders believe is most important when it comes to teaching and learning. This work is being led by CGC member Jay McTighe, who is a veteran educator and author of the Understanding by Design book series.

"The result will be specific observable traits and skills as they relate to each competency of the portrait of a graduate tied to each division level," Gibbs said.

To best support students and teachers and communicate with families about progress within this structure, BT recognized the need to re-align responsibilities in a few key areas. The newly created Assistant Head of Academics position, for which the school was still interviewing at the time of publication, requires an administrator with a sound background in teaching and curriculum development. The chosen candidate will lead BT's work with CGC and oversee a new academic support structure so that each division level will have a dedicated administrator:

- The Assistant Head of Academics will serve as the primary contact for Early Years - grade 4 families.
- Current Dean of Students Bill Harrell will serve as Dean of Students for grades 5-9, in order to provide continuity and extra support as students transition from Middle School to Upper School and Advisory to House.
- Science Department Chair Meg Harms will continue teaching physics, but in her new position as Dean of Students for grades 10-12, she will serve as a primary contact for grade 10-12 students and families and will work with faculty to support House activities.
- Angela Vetter will continue teaching seventh grade English. In her new role as director of curriculum and instruction, she will guide curriculum development and adoption with a focus on embedding the work with CGC.

"The support and enthusiasm for this work by our faculty and staff has been inspiring. Everyone is excited about the possibilities," Gibbs said, "Our partnership with CGC has really helped us all see how everything - our mission, vision, the portrait of a graduate, principles, practices, and curriculum - fits together and truly positions BT as a leader in global education."

