



## What is proficiency-based learning?

The focus of proficiency-based learning is on students' demonstration of desired learning outcomes. Students not only gain the skills, abilities, and knowledge required in an area of study, but more importantly, those necessary to be successful in college, career, and civic life. Proficiency-based learning is designed to identify and address gaps in order to provide equitable learning opportunities for each and every student. This is in contrast to traditional systems which advance students based on seat time.

As Vermont moves towards a proficiency-based system of education, it is important that we have a shared vision for proficiency-based learning.

In a proficiency-based system:

1. There are clear expectations for learning (*EQS 2120.5- Curriculum Content*):
  - Proficiencies based on transferable skills and standards adopted by the state of Vermont include explicit, measurable, learning targets aimed at empowering students;
  - Learning outcomes emphasize proficiencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions. ([Patrick & Sturgis, 2013](#))
2. Student progress is measured and supported (*EQS 2123.2- Local Assessment Systems*):
  - Assessment is meaningful and a learning experience for students;
  - Students receive [timely](#), differentiated support and feedback based on their individual learning needs;
  - Student voice and choice are embedded in assessment options;
  - Students advance upon demonstrating proficiency, not seat time;
  - Learning is the constant and time is the variable.
3. Personalized learning opportunities include flexible pathways to proficiency-based graduation requirements in which: (*EQS 2120.2 + 2120.4- Flexible Pathways + PLPs and Act 77*):
  - Students take ownership of their learning and assessment;
  - Students collect evidence of their learning over time through personalized learning plans;
  - Students' personalized learning plans reflect opportunities for flexibility in where, when and how they learn.

Supervisory Unions/Districts and schools working to implement proficiency-based learning models will have lasting success when they integrate all of these elements into their practice. This well-rounded approach is critical to high quality implementation.

We have adapted work developed by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to create the description above.

**Resources:**

[Laying the Foundation for Competency Education: A Policy Guide for the Next Generation Educator Workforce](#)  
by Lillian Pace, KnowledgeWorks, & Maria Worthen, iNACOL, October 2014.

[What is Competency Based Education?](#) by Chris Sturgis & Susan Patrick, Competency Works,  
February 2013.

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