
MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Curriculum Directors, and Educators
FROM: Jess DeCarolis, Division Director, Student Pathways Division
SUBJECT: Release of Vermont High School Proficiency-Based Graduation Hierarchies
DATE: April 12, 2024

The Agency of Education Releases Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Hierarchies

The Agency of Education (AOE) has released content area [Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement \(PBGR\) Hierarchies](#) for grades 9 through 12. The AOE recommends that Supervisory Unions/Districts (SU/SDs) use these Hierarchies as they reflect on the key concepts and skills that students should demonstrate proficiency in within each content area upon graduation.

Recommendations

PBGRs serve as a foundation for the implementation of standards adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education, Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems, flexible pathways, and personalized learning plans. Local PBGRs establish a cohesive vision of learning within individual SU/SDs. The adoption and use of common PBGRs across Vermont SU/SDs that hold high expectations for students could serve to ensure “that all students in Vermont public schools are afforded educational opportunities that are substantially equal in quality and enable them to achieve or exceed the standards approved by the State Board of Education” ([Educational Quality Standards Rule Series 2000](#)). The AOE PBGR Hierarchies also support the development of those attributes described in a [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate \(PoG\)](#).

A survey, completed in 2020, revealed that PBGRs across the state range from six to one-hundred thirty-five. This range creates inequitable expectations for Vermont graduates. Students who attend career technical centers from various sending districts, as well as those who transfer from one system to another, are particularly impacted. With the goal of creating coherence and equity of expectations across the state, Vermont’s original Sample Graduation Proficiencies have been updated to reflect what every Vermont graduate should know, understand, and do. The PBGR Hierarchies have gone through an extensive internal



and external review, with multiple rounds of educator feedback (see [Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Hierarchies Development Process](#)). They represent the collective learning and work that has occurred across the state over the past few years.

The AOE recognizes the considerable time and effort that educators and other stakeholders across the state have already put forth developing proficiency-based learning systems. The AOE PBGR Hierarchies are not intended to negate the work of local SU/SDs, but rather to build upon it. We encourage SU/SDs to adopt these PBGR Hierarchies, adapt them to fit their context or use each Hierarchy to refine locally defined PBGRs.

Adopt: SU/SDs may choose to adopt the AOE PBGR Hierarchies. Broad adoption of these state-developed PBGR Hierarchies will ensure that students who move between schools (including CTE centers) experience common expectations. Furthermore, common expectations between SU/SDs would also allow for collaborative processes of improvement.

Adapt: SU/SDs may choose to adapt the AOEPBGR Hierarchies to fit their own local context and student needs. It is recommended that student data (e.g., results of local comprehensive assessments, demographics, etc.) and local portraits of a graduate be used as the basis for differentiation between local graduation requirements and the state models.

Refine: Many SU/SDs have PBGRs in place. SU/SDs can use the AOE PBGR Hierarchies as a basis for quality assurance of local PBGRs by comparing and understanding their differences (e.g., why might a PPI that is emphasized in the state Math PBGR Hierarchy not be emphasized in the local Math PBGR). These conversations, reflections, or processes of comparison (between models and local policies/procedures/practices) are part of an iterative process of PBGR improvement with which all SU/SDs are recommended to engage.

As part of this process, the Student Pathways Division has worked with SU/SDs to provide technical assistance for adapting, adopting or refining local PBGRs as part of our current [Participatory Action Research \(PAR\)](#) effort. SU/SDs interested in engaging in this work with the AOE are encouraged to fill out the form that is accessible through the [PAR document](#).

Next Steps

The AOE is seeking feedback from the field on the content area PBGR Hierarchies as part of an iterative process of improvement. AOE staff are particularly interested in hearing from educators or stakeholders in systems that have adopted or adapted the PBGR Hierarchies for their SU/SD or used the Hierarchies as a basis for the revision of local PBGRs. Please share your thoughts on this [Hierarchy Feedback form](#). If you would like to learn more about this work, reach out to the [PBL Help Desk](#).