



# Proficiency-Based Learning Glossary

## **Act 77 (Flexible Pathways Initiative)**

The Flexible Pathways Initiative, formerly and most commonly known as Act 77, was passed by the Legislature in 2013, with the following goals: to encourage and support the creativity of school districts as they develop and expand high-quality educational experiences; to promote opportunities for Vermont students to achieve college and career readiness through high-quality educational experiences that acknowledge individual goals, learning styles, and abilities; and to increase the rates of secondary school completion and postsecondary continuation in Vermont. Key attributes of Act 77 include the personalized learning planning process, personalized learning plans (required for all 7-12 graders), and flexible pathways.

## **Artifact**

An artifact is an object created by a learner as evidence of learning in order to make their thinking visible and display their knowledge.

## **Assessment**

An assessment is a formative or summative evaluation of student performance which is meaningful, accurate and fair and is administered with the purpose of providing feedback on learning for both the teacher and student; summative assessments should be both reliable and valid.

## **Authentic Assessment**

An assessment is considered authentic when students are asked to perform real-world tasks or scenarios that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills that are relevant and applicable to their lives. Authenticity can apply to an assessment's context; the use of real-world tasks, tools, and quality standards; the impact on others; and/or personal authenticity.

## **Badging**

A digital badge is an online representation of a skill you have earned. Digital badging is an assessment and credentialing mechanism that is housed and managed online. Badges are designed to make visible and validate learning in both formal and informal settings and hold the potential to help transform where and how learning is valued.

## **Benchmark**

A benchmark is a point of reference against which a learner's level of proficiency can be measured.

## **College and Career Readiness**

College and Career Readiness refers to the student's ability to enter the workforce or pursue postsecondary education or training without the need for remediation. College and/or Career Readiness is further described by Vermont's Portrait of a Graduate.

## **Coordinated Curriculum**

A curriculum is coordinated when it is aligned with the standards approved by the State Board of Education; coordinated across all grades to prepare students for graduation; coordinated across the supervisory union, including sending schools and technical centers; informed by ongoing review of new research, changing learning opportunities, and updates to the standards approved by the State Board of Education; designed to enable all students to achieve the graduation requirements; and integrated with technology across all disciplines.

## **Critical Proficiency**

Critical proficiencies identify the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities that all students need to demonstrate (across contexts) to be prepared for future learning. Critical proficiencies promote high expectations for all students, and support students' personal, professional, and academic development. At the high school level, [Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements \(PBGs\)](#) reflect those critical proficiencies that lead to postsecondary/career and college readiness.

## **Curriculum**

Curriculum encompasses integrated content, concepts, and skills that allow educators to organize and facilitate a particular course of study. It goes beyond scope and sequence by providing a map that leads to the desired outcome of proficiency.

## **Curriculum Guidelines**

Curriculum guidelines identify best practices for curricula. In Vermont, guidelines are most frequently established by the Supervisory Union/District and provide parameters for teachers to plan within.

Generally speaking, these guidelines will include, but are not limited to:

- a) Alignment to national/local standards
- b) Policy and rules about student groups
- c) A focus to ensure equity and access
- d) Criteria to determine quality curricula

## **Diagnostic Assessment**

A diagnostic assessment is an in-depth assessment only given to some students that provides information about the current knowledge and skills of the learner. This information is used to plan, modify, and/or differentiate instruction or intervention.

## **Differentiated Instruction**

Differentiated instruction is designed to help students meet proficiency that is based on individual learning needs and styles. The learning goals are the same, yet the teacher provides choice and exercises flexibility in methods of support, feedback, assessment, grouping, and instruction to create the best learning experiences for all students.

## **Digital Literacy**

Digital literacy is the ability to effectively and critically navigate various digital platforms and understand, evaluate, and create content in order to communicate using a range of digital technologies.

## **Distance Learning**

Distance learning, sometimes called *remote learning*, refers to learning that takes place when students and educators are not physically in the same room. Distance learning can occur utilizing analog as well as digital resources, both online and offline through distributed materials.

## **Education Quality Standards**

The [Education Quality Standards](#) (EQS) are rules enacted to ensure that all learners 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.

## **Equity**

Equity requires that each and every learner has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background and/or family income.

## **Evidence**

Evidence of student learning is collected and used as an indicator to determine whether or not the student has met the standards of the curriculum at any level of decision making. It includes statewide assessments of learning, formative assessments, and summative assessments. Evidence is used by teachers to make decisions related to student proficiency and may also serve as determinants in establishing proficiencies at the local level and graduation requirements.

## **Evidence-Based**

[Evidence-based](#) refers to any concept or strategy that is derived from or informed by objective evidence—most commonly, educational research or metrics of school, teacher, and learner performance. Common applications include evidence-based decisions, evidence-based school improvement, and evidence-based instruction.

## Feedback

Feedback is an instructional strategy that provides information to learners during the learning process in order to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement. Feedback should be actionable and timely with the goal of moving learning forward. The type of feedback varies based on learner needs as well as the relationship between the person giving and the person receiving the feedback.

## Financial Literacy

Financial literacy encompasses the ability to use knowledge and skills to manage one's financial resources effectively for a lifetime of financial security. Financial literacy is more than just knowledge or information; it is the ability to use information and resources to achieve and maintain financial wellbeing.

## Flexible Pathways

[Flexible Pathways](#) are any combination of high-quality expanded learning opportunities that occur under the supervision of an appropriately licensed educator, including academic and experiential components, which build and assess attainment of identified proficiencies and lead to secondary school completion, civic engagement, and postsecondary readiness. Flexible pathways allow students to apply their knowledge and skills to tasks of personal interest as part of their personalized learning plans. Flexible pathways also ensure that students have multiple ways to achieve and demonstrate proficiency, not all of which require time spent inside a traditional classroom setting.

## Formative Assessment

[Formative assessment](#) is an intentional, ongoing part of the learning process for both students and teachers. It elicits immediate evidence of student learning. The general goal of formative assessment is to collect detailed information that can be used to improve instruction and student learning *while it's happening*. Formative assessments are *for* learning, while summative assessments are *of* learning. Effective use of the formative assessment process requires students and teachers to integrate and embed the following practices:

- a) Clarifying learning goals and success criteria within a broader progression of learning;
- b) Eliciting and analyzing evidence of student thinking and performance;
- c) Engaging in self-assessment and peer feedback;
- d) Providing actionable feedback; and
- e) Using evidence and feedback to move learning forward by adjusting learning strategies, goals, or next instructional steps.

## Frameworks

A *Framework* is intended to connect interrelated core concepts for student learning in a variety of contexts. In some cases, a Framework may substitute for Standards. In order for a document to be considered a Framework it must:

- a) Provide conceptual understandings guiding student learning.
- b) Serve to facilitate conversations for creation of relevant learning outcomes.
- c) Include a demonstrated tie to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

d) Be intended to evolve as research and practice develop.

## High Leverage Concepts

High Leverage Concepts (HLCs) are the foundation of the [All Learners Network](#) approach to supporting all learners. HLCs are the key mathematical understandings that students will need to be successful in the following year of school.

## Hybrid Learning

Hybrid learning is any combination of in-person learning and remote learning.

## Interim Assessment

An interim assessment is a form of assessment that educators use to evaluate where students are in their learning progress and determine whether they are on track to performing well on future assessments, such as standardized tests or end-of-course exams.

## Learning Progressions

Learning progressions are pathways that describe a developmental trajectory in which each new learning opportunity builds on and is informed by the one before it, in both depth and complexity.

## Learning Targets

[Learning targets](#) identify the goals for a lesson or educational experience and are framed from a learner's perspective. They clarify what to learn, how deeply to learn it, and how to demonstrate evidence of new learning.

## Lexile Measures

[Lexile measures](#) provide information about text complexity and predict reader comprehension. There are two types of Lexile measures: text measures and reader measures. A Lexile text measure indicates the complexity of a text as calculated by the Lexile Analyzer, which breaks down text into characteristics such as sentence length and word frequency. A Lexile reader measure predicts a reader's comprehension of a given text and can be obtained by administering an assessment or reading program that reports Lexile scores.

## Local Comprehensive Assessment System

A Local Comprehensive Assessment System (LCAS) is a coordinated and comprehensive system that assesses the standards approved by the State Board of Education; employs a balance of assessment types, including but not limited to, teacher-or learner-designed assessments, portfolios, performances, exhibitions and projects; includes both formative and summative assessments; enables decisions to be made about progression and graduation, including measuring proficiency-based learning; informs the development of Personalized Learning Plans and support; provides data that informs decisions regarding instruction, professional learning,

and educational resources and curriculum; and reflects strategies and goals outlined in the district's Continuous Improvement Plan.

## **Performance Assessment**

Performance assessments are any teacher- or student-designed learning activity or investigation in which students demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and/or skills through a performance task. Performance assessments engage students in meaningful learning in authentic contexts, show genuine applications of knowledge, and yield a tangible product and/or performance that serves as evidence of learning.

## **Performance Indicators**

Performance indicators represent key concrete actions that provide evidence of a student's proficiency level related to an intended goal.

## **Performance Task**

A performance task is what students actually do within a larger performance assessment framework. Tasks built around student interests engage students and help them make connections to their personal lives.

## **Personalized Learning Plan**

A [Personalized Learning Plan](#) (PLP) is a plan created by a student, with the support of parents/guardians, teachers/mentors and peers, that defines the scope and rigor of academic and experiential opportunities that will lead to secondary school completion, postsecondary readiness, and civic engagement. Creating Personalized Learning Plans provides students the opportunity to reflect upon their learning and shape their future, and enables the adults in their lives to better understand each student as a unique individual. The planning and refining process should be ongoing and iterative, with formal updates to the PLP occurring at least annually, to ensure the student's emerging abilities, aspirations, dispositions, and interests inform the student's path toward proficiency.

## **Portfolio**

A learner's portfolio is a compilation of academic work and other forms of educational evidence assembled for the purpose of evaluating coursework quality, learning progress, and academic achievement; determining whether the learner has met standards; helping the learner reflect on their academic goals; and creating an archive of academic work.

## **Priority Instructional Content**

Priority instructional content is the content identified to facilitate the teaching and learning of the critical proficiencies.

## Priority Standards

Priority Standards are a subset of standards that have been identified as most essential to a specific content area, grade, or course and outline what students should know and be able to do in order to be prepared for the next level.

## Proficiencies

Proficiencies include explicit, measurable learning objectives based on standards and measure a learner's knowledge and skill demonstrated in a consistent manner, in various settings over time. Proficiencies are also referred to as competencies.

## Proficiency-Based Education

Proficiency-based education is a standards-based system of instruction, assessment, and reporting that requires learners to demonstrate competence in targeted knowledge, skills, and/or abilities before moving onto the next level or challenge. Proficiency-based education may also be referred to as mastery or competency-based education.

## Proficiency-Based Grading

Proficiency-based grading identifies where a student is along a continuum of learning, often with a four-point scale (e.g., beginning, developing, proficient, and expanding) rather than a percentage scale that has been used traditionally. In a proficiency-based system, the purpose of grading is to let all stakeholders -- parents/guardians, children, educators, and community members -- understand what students know and how they perform in relation to expected learning outcomes.

## Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements

[Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements](#) (PBGRs) are the locally-delineated set of content knowledge and transferable skills connected to state standards that, when supplemented with any additional locally-developed requirements, have been determined to qualify a student for earning a high school diploma.

## Proficiency-Based Learning

[Proficiency-Based Learning](#) (PBL) is any system of academic instruction, assessment, and reporting that is based on learners demonstrating proficiency in knowledge, skills, and abilities they are expected to learn before progressing to the next level or challenge. Proficiency-based learning may also be referred to as mastery or competency-based learning.

## Proficiency-Based Reporting

Proficiency-based reporting systems require clear expectations for what will be learned; a shared understanding of the depth of learning necessary to demonstrate proficiency; strategies for documenting and reporting learning over time; a transparent method of communicating with learners, parents, and guardians where learners are along a continuum; and opportunities, when necessary, for learners to retake assessments in order to progress towards proficiency.

## **Proficiency Scale**

A proficiency scale is a criterion-based assessment tool that is task neutral and includes explicit performance expectations for each possible rating.

## **Proficient**

Proficient means that a learner has demonstrated competence in relation to knowledge and/or a set of skills related to identified standards.

## **Project-Based Learning**

[Project-based learning](#) is an approach to education in which learners gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to a real-world, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. Students demonstrate their learning by creating a public product or presentation for an authentic and relevant audience.

## **Quantile Measures**

Quantile measures help educators and parents track student growth in mathematics over time, regardless of grade level. The Quantile Framework provides two measures on the same scale: a measure for students and a measure for skills and concepts. The student Quantile measure describes what the student is capable of understanding.

## **Remote Learning**

Remote learning, sometimes called *distance learning*, refers to learning that takes place when students and educators are not physically in the same room. Remote learning can occur utilizing analog as well as digital resources, both online and offline through distributed materials.

## **Rubric**

A rubric is an evaluation tool used to assess performance against a set of criteria. Rubrics clearly define academic expectations for learners and help to ensure consistency in the evaluation of academic work from learner to learner, assignment to assignment, or course to course.

## **Scoring Criteria**

Scoring criteria define what to look for in a learner's response to determine whether or not they are progressing towards meeting a learning target(s).

## **Self-Assessment**

Self-assessment includes the comparison of one's own performance against established criteria, change in performance over time, and/or a description of current performance. Learners are given the opportunity to identify areas for improvement and revise accordingly. Self-assessment can promote learning if it is used while the learning is taking place.

## Single-Point Rubric

A single-point rubric breaks down the components of an assignment, only describing the criteria for proficiency. It allows for critical analysis of a performance to determine which criteria have been met as well as those that require additional work by providing a space for descriptive feedback about these criteria. Single-point rubrics are also referred to as performance criteria lists.

## Standards

Standards identify the *essential knowledge, skills and behaviors* that should be taught and learned in school.

- a) *Essential knowledge* is what students should know. It includes the most important and enduring ideas, issues, dilemmas, principles, and concepts from the disciplines.
- b) *Essential skills* are what the students should be able to do. Skills are ways of thinking, working, communicating, and investigating.
- c) *Essential behaviors* identify the behaviors related to success in and outside of school. These include (but are not limited to) providing evidence to back up assertions and developing productive, satisfying relationships with others.

State-approved standards specific to content areas identified in EQS 2120.5 include:

- a) [Literacy](#) (including critical thinking, language, reading, speaking and listening, and writing);
- b) [Mathematical content and practices](#) (including numbers, operations, and the concepts of algebra and geometry by the end of grade 10);
- c) [Scientific inquiry and content knowledge](#) (including the concepts of life sciences, physical sciences, earth and space sciences and engineering design);
- d) [Global Citizenship](#) (including the concepts of civics, economics, geography, [world language](#), cultural studies, and history);
- e) [Physical education](#) and [health education](#) as defined in 16 V.S.A. §131;
- f) [Artistic expression](#) (including visual, media and performing arts); and
- g) Transferable Skills (including communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, inquiry, problem solving and the use of [technology](#)).

## Summative Assessment

A summative assessment is an assessment that is used to evaluate the degree of learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period—typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, program, or school year. The assessment results are reported and are evaluative, rather than diagnostic.

## Transferable Skills

[Transferable skills](#) are comprised of an essential set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be taught across content areas and are critically important to success in today's world, particularly in collegiate programs and modern careers. Transferable skills include communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, inquiry, problem solving, and the use of technology.

## **Universal Screening**

Universal Screening is conducted to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes. Universal screening assessments are typically brief, conducted with all students at a grade level, and followed by additional testing or short-term progress monitoring to corroborate students' risk status.

## **Virtual Learning**

Virtual learning is a learning experience that is enhanced through utilizing computers and/or the internet both outside and inside the facilities of the educational organization.