



COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION: MOVE ON WHEN READY

Every student has unique talents and abilities, and every student deserves an education that adapts to their needs rather than requiring conformity to an outdated model of education. Our nation's goals and expectations for all students have risen. The conventional, one-size-fits-all system of education must evolve and adapt to meet the individual needs of each student and equip them for success in the 21st Century.

The terms *competency*, *proficiency*, and *mastery* are often used interchangeably.



Competency-based education is a system of instruction where students advance to higher levels of learning when they demonstrate mastery of concepts and skills regardless of time, place or pace.

A collaboration of innovative leaders and practitioners, led by CompetencyWorks and iNACOL, developed the following [working definition](#) of competency-based education in which:

- Students advance upon mastery.
- Competencies include explicit, measureable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.
- Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.
- Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
- Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions.

A traditional, time-based education system advances students based on their age, regardless of what they have learned. This outdated model limits student achievement in two fundamental ways: it holds back students who could be excelling more quickly, and it pushes students forward who are not yet ready, leaving them with gaps of knowledge, skill and understanding that must be filled later.

“We continue to transform education to a personalized system where every learner is met at their level. They are guaranteed success. They are challenged. They are pushed and they leave our system ready to choose college or their career.”

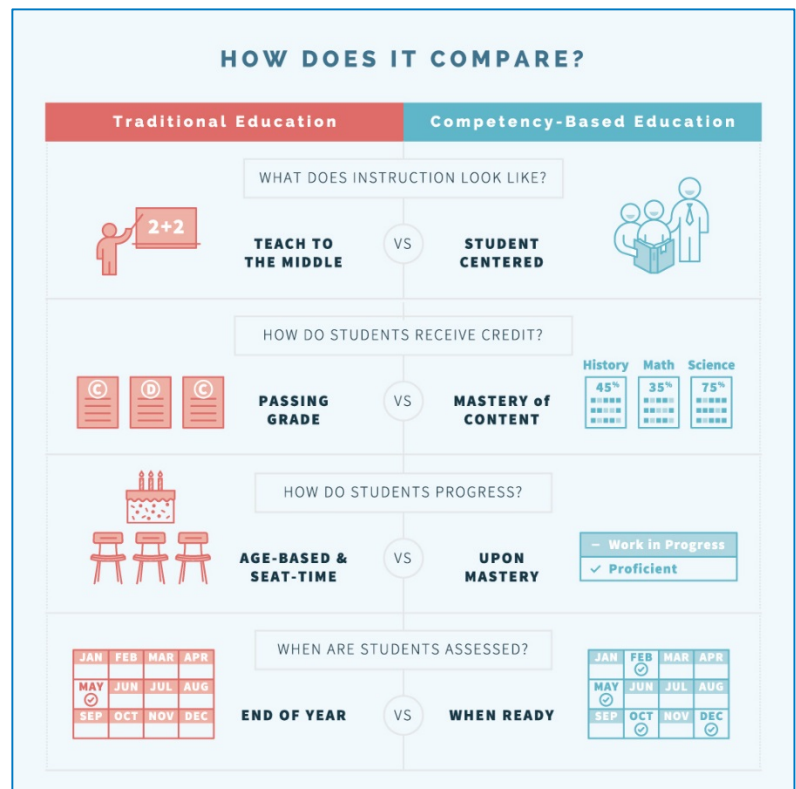
Thomas Rooney, superintendent of Lindsay Unified School District, California

The time has come to redesign education from an age-based grade level system to one where students advance based on what levels of learning they have mastered. The pace and style will look different for different students, but the goals of mastering and understanding concepts and allowing students opportunities to “show what they know” in order to advance to more challenging material remains constant.

What is a competency-based education system?

In order to fully realize the benefits of a competency-based system, states should adopt the following fundamental principles:

1. Provide flexibility from time based systems in statute or rule.
2. Transition to competency-based diplomas.
3. Design a state assessment system that supports competency-based learning.
4. Align accountability systems to competency-based learning environments.
5. Facilitate acceptance of competency-based diplomas and credits by higher education.
6. Encourage policies that recognize anytime, anywhere learning.
7. Communicate clearly with all stakeholders.



Learn more:

- [2014 Digital Learning Report Card](#)
- [2015 National Summit on Education Reform Strategy Session: How to Spark Education Innovation in Your State](#)
- [Presentation on Competency Based Education](#)
- [Digital Learning Now: The Shift from Cohorts to Competency](#)

Read more on the EdFly about Competency-Based Education:

- [Idaho Agrees: Flexible Pace > Seat Time](#)
- [5 Steps for Utah to Cultivate Competency-Based Learning](#)
- [Timing is Everything](#)
- [Rethinking School](#)
- [Warning: Delayed Graduation Possible](#)
- [When Opportunity Presents Itself](#)