

## **VT Proficiency-Based Learning: A Systemic Approach Self-Assessment**

This self-assessment is intended to help you and your colleagues reflect on the essential components and practices to support proficiency-based learning. Additionally, it is intended to inform your facilitators from Great Schools Partnership about your practice and how our seminar series can best support your work. Thank you for taking the time to carefully review this self-assessment. You can complete the self-assessment electronically by clicking [here](#).

### **Instructions**

1. Review the dimensions and descriptions of school practices below.
2. For each dimension, rate your school district on a scale of 1-5. 1 is equal to the "Initiating" description. 3 is equal to "Developing". 5 is equal to "Performing."
3. Optional: add narrative comments below each section of the self-assessment (Policy, Practice, Community Engagement) to capture your reasoning behind your ratings.

Results for your team will be shared at your December session.

If you wish, you may have colleagues who are NOT attending the series provide their input on the self-assessment too. This may make for a deeper conversation with your team at the series.

## Policy and Framework

	Initiating	Developing	Performing
Conceptual Framework and Core Principles	<p>There is little agreement about the essential knowledge and skills for success after k-12 schooling or principles to guide student learning. The school/district utilizes a proficiency verification process that is based entirely on course success and expectations vary widely within the school/district. Educators and school committee members are unfamiliar with the state frameworks for proficiency-based learning.</p>	<p>Proficiency-based learning is focused mostly on course-level descriptions of knowledge and skill. The school/district utilizes a verification process based on course success and there are common expectations for success, with a variety of assessment methods under a local assessment system. Learning goals for courses are clear and assessments for courses are aligned to common standards. There is clear alignment with state frameworks for proficiency-based learning. Students may be required to complete capstone projects, exhibitions of learning, or performance tasks to verify proficiency.</p>	<p>A clear set of graduation standards exist for transferable skills and content-area knowledge and skills. These standards represent the essential knowledge and skills for success in postsecondary education, a career, and citizenship and are aligned with state frameworks for proficiency-based learning. The school/district utilizes a proficiency verification process that flexibly supports students demonstrating learning in a variety of ways within the district's local assessment system. Shared criteria for success are applied across a wide variety of demonstrations of learning, resulting in greater personalization for student learning.</p>

District Alignment	Students may experience very different expectations for meeting proficiency standards from classroom to classroom within a school. There appears to be little agreement within the district or schools about essential standards, assessment methods, or instructional practice. Many educators express little or no knowledge of, or professional learning about, proficiency-based learning. Transition points between schools and grades represent significant challenges to student success, due to insufficient coordination.	There is alignment within schools about essential knowledge and skills and work is beginning to bridge common gaps between grades and grade spans. A district-wide team has been created to be leaders on proficiency-based learning and to support shared understanding and alignments throughout the district. Professional learning opportunities are regularly available for teachers to work within grade spans on proficiency-based learning. There are opportunities for educators within schools to support students as they transition between grades.	All schools within the district use a common language to describe proficiency-based learning. A proficiency-based learning team that includes teachers, students, and parents plans professional learning, community outreach, and educates the school committee as necessary to ensure sound district alignment. Professional learning opportunities are regularly available for teachers to work within and across grade spans on proficiency-based learning. There is a system in place to anticipate transition challenges and to proactively address them across schools, with coordinated family outreach.
School Board/Committee Support	The school board expresses little knowledge of proficiency-based learning. The board may reduce proficiency-based learning merely to changes in reporting or grading policies, or the language of graduation policy, and not fully understand the systemic approach to teaching and learning.	The school board has engaged in information sessions and workshops regarding proficiency-based learning. School board members can describe proficiency-based learning and articulate how it supports student achievement. There is clear understanding of how policy shifts implicate changes in educational practice.	The school board expresses active and vocal support for proficiency-based learning. Proficiency-based learning is a clear and integral component of the district's strategic plan.

<p>Local Policies</p>	<p>Graduation and promotion policies do not reflect a proficiency-based approach to education. Students are required to accrue a certain number of credits in each discipline, without reference to the knowledge and skills essential for success. Individual teachers are responsible for setting grading and attendance policies for their classrooms.</p>	<p>Graduation and promotion policies recognize attainment of learning standards, and not only seat-time requirements. While the district may utilize a credit-based system to support a broad base of learning, the credits are tied directly to learning standards. The school committee or schools develop common policies (ie: grading, attendance, eligibility) that support students attaining proficiency.</p>	<p>Policies exist to support attainment of graduation proficiencies in a personalized manner. The school committee or schools have set policies supporting flexible pathways for student learning, in addition to common school-wide practices. Policies support innovative practice and allow students and teachers flexibility for attaining learning goals.</p>
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## Practice

	Initiating	Developing	Performing
Summative Assessments	<p>Summative assessments are not always clearly aligned to essential knowledge and skills and may not assess higher order thinking skills. Students are given multiple opportunities to demonstrate success in some courses/learning experiences, but this practice varies widely in the school/district. In most learning experiences, students demonstrate their learning in the same way, with little flexibility or choice in assessment methods.</p>	<p>The school/district uses some common assessments in grade levels or courses. Assessments are aligned to learning standards and emphasize higher order thinking skills for students. Summative assessments are organized within a comprehensive local assessment system that is articulated and understood by teachers, students, and parents. All students, in all learning experiences, have multiple opportunities to demonstrate success and are given choices in how they demonstrate their learning.</p>	<p>Summative assessments follow common scoring criteria and are based on the transfer of knowledge and skills to novel performance tasks. Students have a role in designing performance tasks and have a clear understanding of scoring criteria, enabling student choice and direction in demonstrating learning. Students are guided within the district's local assessment system, ensuring high quality results from summative assessments in line with common expectations. When students are unsuccessful on summative assessments, teachers and students treat the assessments as formative, providing reteaching and reassessment where necessary.</p>

<p>Formative Assessments</p>	<p>All students generally complete the same practice work, regardless of their knowledge and skill. Formative assessments are included in academic reports of student learning due to a belief that students will only do work that is graded. Teachers sometimes adjust instruction based on formative results, but some express uncertainty about how to make these adjustments. In some cases, the connection between the summative assessment tasks and formative assessment opportunities is unclear.</p>	<p>Formative assessments are used for practice and feedback, but do not impact a student's academic report. All teachers use formative assessment results to make adjustments to class instruction and offer students choices in formative assessments, tailoring practice work to different student needs. There is clear alignment between summative assessment tasks and scoring criteria and the formative work students complete with the local assessment system.</p>	<p>Students select from a variety of formative assessment strategies to practice essential knowledge and skills, with support and guidance from educators. Students and teachers revise instructional and learning strategies based on formative assessment results. Students and teachers examine summative assessments, exemplars, and scoring guides and plan formative assessment practice based on where students are in relation to learning goals, supporting understanding of and success within the local assessment system.</p>
<p>Grading and Feedback</p>	<p>Feedback to students is mostly evaluative without descriptions of next steps or how to improve. Grading practices are determined by teachers or departments. Academic grades include non-academic factors (ie: participation, punctuality) and individual teachers determine re-assessment opportunities for students.</p>	<p>Teachers utilize descriptive feedback to promote student growth and learning. School-wide grading practices support student learning by allowing students to revise and reassess as they learn without averaging early attempts with later ones. Academic grades are calculated and reported separately from behavior / habits of work grades.</p>	<p>Teachers and students utilize descriptive feedback practices to focus on learning and growth. Students are experienced in self- and peer-assessment and can describe expected learning goals, their current achievement, and steps they can take to move closer to expectations. School-wide grading practices are embraced by educators, students, and community members.</p>

<p>Instruction</p>	<p>There is a wide spectrum of instructional quality in the school/district, with little or no common language to describe effective instruction. Students experience widely different expectations from classroom to classroom and often work on lower order skills that are misaligned to summative assessments and to essential learning standards. Teachers rarely observe each other or share instructional practice (ie: student work, unit plans, or videos of teaching) with colleagues to improve student learning.</p>	<p>There is evidence of a sound array of instructional strategies for whole-group, small-group and individual instruction in heterogeneously grouped classrooms, and these strategies represent a shared understanding of effective instruction. Students engage in complex work that encourages higher order thinking, preparing them for success on summative assessments. Teachers use clear learning targets that describe complex cognitive skills to frame units and lessons and continually check for student understanding and progress. Professional learning opportunities for teachers include peer observation or sharing instructional practice, with specific feedback to improve student learning.</p>	<p>Students and teachers actively discuss learning targets and make plans to address the content and process necessary to achieve proficiency. Teachers intentionally plan lessons and units to include opportunities for reteaching and reassessment, especially for complex concepts that typically challenge students. Students and teachers reflect on learning progress as well as their learning processes, and display flexibility in adjusting learning experiences to meet student needs. Teachers regularly observe and reflect together on student learning and engage in on-going cycles of planning, instruction, assessment, and analysis to improve teaching and learning.</p>
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<p>Flexible Pathways</p>	<p>Most students experience similar, course-based learning experiences and there is little variation among students. While students are not prevented from accessing alternative learning pathways (internships, independent studies, etc.), they are not encouraged to do so. Pathways are generally viewed as enrichment activities for students that do not necessarily involve school personnel or as rigid programs that result in little flexibility or choice for students.</p>	<p>Some students have access to work-based, blended, CTE, and dual enrollment learning pathways through school-based programs and efforts have been made to expand access. Through advisory or guidance counselors, students are supported in identifying and pursuing learning outside of school. There is a clear connection between learning pathways and requirements for graduation and students can shift flexibly between learning environments to support their learning.</p>	<p>All students are encouraged or required to enroll in work-based, blended, CTE and dual enrollment learning experiences. There is a formal system for connecting students to flexible pathway opportunities and a concerted effort to cultivate partners in the community to support this work. Pathways are integrated with academic and social expectations for students and are viewed as an essential method for developing student ownership of their learning.</p>
<p>Personal Learning Plans</p>	<p>Students complete an annual PLP with little support. Teachers do not have access to student PLPs and teachers and students generally report a lack of connection between the PLP and the students' educational experiences.</p>	<p>Students complete PLPs with advisors or guidance counselors, choosing courses and learning experiences based on stated goals, strengths, and areas for improvement. Teachers have access to PLPs, and are open to students suggesting alternative ways of learning or demonstrating learning based on PLP goals or reflections. Students reflect on PLPs multiple times each year, making revisions and adjustments.</p>	<p>Students' PLPs are an integral part of each learning experience, driving student ownership of their learning. Students are partners with teachers to utilize PLPs for planning learning experiences and demonstrations of learning. Students regularly reflect on and revise their PLP in every learning experience. Teachers dedicate collaborative planning time to revise instruction and assessment based on PLPs.</p>

<p>Intervention and Support</p>	<p>Teachers generally support student learning before school, after school, or during breaks and lunch. Scheduled intervention opportunities sometimes conflict with instructional time for students. While data is used to identify students in need of intervention, student progress is not monitored to release students from intervention or to provide support to students after initial data analyses are complete. Interventions are sometimes misaligned to student needs.</p>	<p>There is time built into the school's schedule for students to access outside-of-class support from their classroom teacher or a qualified teacher in the field. Teachers use data to identify students who may need outside support and students are grouped flexibly in intervention blocks, resulting in targeted, just-in-time support. Interventions are matched to students' academic needs. There are some opportunities within the classroom for acceleration, but may be constrained to additional work for students, as opposed to deeper application of learning.</p>	<p>There is a shared understanding in the school that for the majority of students, interventions are most successful when integrated in core classroom learning. Teachers plan for reteaching and relearning opportunities in their instruction. For smaller percentages of students, small group and individual intervention support is scheduled into the school day, and students are flexibly included and released from intervention, based on learning progress. Data is used to match students' academic and social/emotional/behavior needs to interventions and support. The school schedules acceleration/enrichment opportunities into the school day, and all students have access to deeper learning options.</p>
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<p>Use of Time and Space</p>	<p>Professional learning is constrained to occasional workshop days with few opportunities for teachers to engage with each other on curriculum or instruction. Small numbers of students access flexible learning pathways such as dual enrollment or independent studies. Teachers generally feel restricted by the schedule and see it as a barrier to interdisciplinary learning or other opportunities for increasing student learning.</p>	<p>Time for professional learning is embedded in the school schedule for teachers to collaborate on curriculum and instructional practice. Students have some flexibility for pursuing flexible learning pathways within the existing school schedule. Teachers work flexibly within the schedule and structure of the school based on shared goals for student learning (ie: interdisciplinary projects, co-teaching or team-teaching, and modifying the schedule for speakers, field trips or other extended learning experiences).</p>	<p>Time for professional learning is embedded in the school schedule, and the work is led by teachers with experience and training in facilitating adult learning. Most students access flexible learning pathways and flexibly accessing school supports and resources to design learning experiences. Teachers and school leaders work to refine structures and schedules to support a wide range of learning options (ie: staggered schedules to expand learning time; modules or learning intensives for student enrichment and support).</p>
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## Community Engagement

	Initiating	Developing	Performing
Family and Community Engagement	The school/district regularly surveys families and community members. Survey results are published and reported upon to the school committee. It is common for families or educators to describe communication as lacking.	Family and community members provide regular feedback and input on district-wide and school-wide efforts for proficiency-based learning. School leaders have an open door policy, encouraging families and community members to discuss concerns or ideas for school improvement.	Formal roles for family and community members. Informal opportunities for connection, dialogue and feedback. The school / district regularly hosts opportunities for face-to-face communication with community members. Students take an active role in facilitating and leading community conversations.
Communication Structures	The school/district has a website with basic contact information, but it is not used to keep students, families, and teachers updated on school progress. Website pages for teachers are often unpopulated or out of date. Local media reporting is primarily concerned with extracurricular activities and information about the school district is obtained primarily through school board meetings, and not through direct contact with school leaders.	The school / district keeps updated materials on its website. Some teachers utilize blogs, social media, or websites to keep students and families engaged outside of school hours. Parent/family groups and their social media outlets are seen as the most effective way to gain up-to-date information about the school. The school / district leadership submits articles to local media outlets to describe and inform the community about its work.	The school/district website is seen as a valuable place to gain information about the school and has interactive features for student and community input. Teachers utilize modes of communication tailored to their specific families and students to engage in interactive communication about teaching and learning. School/district leadership actively supports local media by providing resources to inform accurate reporting on school activities, such as summaries of research, access to classrooms and teachers, and ongoing conversations about school improvement work.

<p>Reporting on Student Progress</p>	<p>While the school district may be moving to, or implementing, proficiency-based learning, its reporting process is traditional. Student achievement is reported as a singular symbol (letter or number) for each course / learning experience and there is little information about what that symbol represents, in terms of learning outcomes. Students, teachers, and families meet to discuss progress on an “as needed” basis.</p>	<p>The report card and transcript provide a clear representation of student learning. While a traditional system may remain in place, families and students can easily access information about what standards have been met. Teachers and parents meet 2-3 annually for discussions of student progress; students may or may not attend and participate in these conversations.</p>	<p>The reporting system is entirely standards-based, providing up-to-date information about student learning. Teachers, students, and parents are all familiar with the reporting system and the school/district has developed a clear profile for external audiences, such as postsecondary institutions and employers. Students lead conferences between themselves, educators, and families multiple times per year, going beyond the report card to deeper demonstrations of their learning, through examinations of work and reflection on their PLP.</p>
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