

Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements: An Introduction to the AOE Sample Graduation Proficiency Documents

What are Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements?

This parallels the important question, “How do students earn a high-school diploma?” In a proficiency based system, students earn their diploma by demonstrating mastery of skills and content. Mastery can be demonstrated through multiple venues, including (but not limited to) teacher-designed assessments, written papers, presentations, portfolios or projects. The specific requirements are determined by local policy, but must represent the content standards adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education in the curriculum areas of:

- literacy
- mathematical content and practices
- scientific inquiry and content knowledge
- global citizenship
- physical education
- health education
- artistic expression
- transferable skills ([2120.5](#))

Therefore, proficiency-based graduation requirements are the locally-delineated set of content knowledge and skills that have been determined to qualify a student for earning a high school diploma.

Why are Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements (PBGRs) important?

PBGRs assure that when students show mastery in the essential skills and knowledge of diverse content areas and consequently receive a high-school diploma, they are prepared for the college, career and citizenship opportunities ahead.

PBGRs are also required by law. The Education Quality Standards (EQS), approved by the Vermont State Board of Education in 2014, require schools to have PBGRs to determine progress and graduation readiness for students graduating in 2020 (the incoming 2014 seventh grade class) and for each subsequent graduating class. This means that the diplomas of the class of 2020 will be issued based on proficiency. Local policy may outline additional graduation requirements. ([2120.7](#))

How do I use the sample Graduation Proficiencies documents?

The Vermont AOE has created samples of content area and transferable skills Graduation Proficiencies. A portion of the sample ELA document is shown below:

GRADUATION PROFICIENCIES	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS—ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS—MIDDLE SCHOOL	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS—HIGH SCHOOL
1. READING Comprehend, interpret, analyze, and evaluate a wide range and level of complex literary and informational texts.	a. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. (1) b. Determine themes and central ideas of texts; summarize texts. (2) c. Analyze the relationships or interactions between individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in literary and informational text. (3) d. Interpret words and phrases and analyze how word	a. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. (1) b. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text. (2) c. Analyze how a text makes connections among	a. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support an analysis of the text, including any applicable primary or secondary sources, and determine both explicit and implicit meanings, such as inferences that can be drawn from the text and where the text leaves matters uncertain. (1) b. Determine the central ideas of the text and provide an objective summary. (2)



PBGR



Clustered, grade-level Performance Indicators used to assess progress and proficiency

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The far left hand column of each document contains the actual *Graduation Proficiency* requirement, or GP. These are statements within broad categories that elicit the essential content and skills in each curriculum area. Each content area has between 5 and 10 GPs. In the AOE’s sample model, by showing evidence of proficiency for each GP, students would meet their school’s requirements for graduation.

The right three columns are lists of sample *Performance Indicators*. Performance Indicators are all derived from existing content area standards; the ELA and Math Performance Indicators are taken from the Common Core State Standards, the Science Performance Indicators come from the Next Generation Science Standards, etc. Performance indicators are used to assess whether or not a student has met the Graduation Proficiency associated with those indicators. It is important to note that, when using this model, performance indicators do not constitute a checklist to proficiency. Instead, student proficiency against each GP should be determined by assessing some combination of its related Performance Indicators, but not necessarily all of them, with the determinations around “how many” and “which” Performance Indicators to teach and assess being made at the local level.


In the AOE model, Performance Indicators are grouped by grade cluster (elementary, middle and high school). The high school Performance Indicators inform determinations of student proficiency, as described above. The elementary and middle school performance indicators provide additional learning progressions milestones, and encourage schools to frame PBGRs as the outcome of a larger, K-12 Proficiency-Based Learning system.

In addition to being assessed against content area PBGRs, EQS also requires students to be assessed against a set of transferable skills PBGRs. A portion of the AOE’s sample Transferable Skills PBGR document is shown below.

GRADUATION PROFICIENCY	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
1. Clear and Effective Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Demonstrate organized and purposeful communication. b. Use evidence and logic appropriately in communication. c. Integrate information gathered from active speaking and listening. d. Adjust communication based on the audience, context, and purpose. e. Demonstrate effective, expressive, and receptive communication, including oral, written, multi-media, and performance. f. Use technology to further enhance and disseminate communication. g. Collaborate effectively and respectfully.
2. Self-Direction	a. Identify, manage, and access new opportunities related to learning goals.



PBGR



Performance Indicators

Transferable Skills are considered overarching skills, such as communication, problem-solving and citizenship. These skills are not assessed in isolation, but instead are demonstrated over a body of evidence collected through the *content* performance indicators in *multiple* curriculum areas. The indicators of proficiency for transferable skills complete the description of proficiency by elaborating upon content-area proficiency. Indicators for transferable skills are viewed as being relevant to K-12 students although demonstration of proficiency in a given transferable skill (like effective communication) would look different for a kindergartener than it would for a twelfth grader. Therefore, transferable skills are not separated by grade cluster, just as they are not differentiated by content area.

If you have any questions concerning Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements or this resource, please contact Tom Alderman, Director, Secondary and Adult Division, at tom.alderman@state.vt.us.