Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified

For proficiency-based learning to be effective, school leaders and teachers need to prioritize. They have to determine what critical skills students absolutely need to acquire before they graduate from high school, what content knowledge students need to know in each subject area, and what important benchmarks students need to meet as they progress through their education.

Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified provides a foundational structure that will help schools prioritize learning goals and build a more coherent academic program.

The following diagram illustrates how the Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified model works in practice:

Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified
A Great Schools Partnership Learning Model

Graduation Requirement	Reporting Method		Assessment Method
YES	Transcripts and Report Cards	**Cross-Curricular** Graduation Standards 5–8 standards taught in all content areas	**Body of Evidence** Students demonstrate achievement of standards through a body of evidence evaluated using common rubrics
YES	Transcripts and Report Cards	**Content-Area** Graduation Standards 5–8 standards for each content area	**Verification of Proficiency** Students demonstrate achievement of content-area graduation standards through their aggregate performance on summative assessments over time
NO	Progress Reports	**Performance Indicators** 5–10 indicators for each cross-curricular and content-area standard that move students toward proficiency and the achievement of graduation standards	**Summative Assessment** Graded summative assessments are used to evaluate the achievement of performance indicators
NO	Teacher Feedback	**Learning Objectives** Learning objectives guide the design of curriculum units that move students toward proficiency and the achievement of performance indicators	**Formative Assessment** Ungraded formative assessments are used to evaluate student learning progress

Cross-Curricular Graduation Standards are aligned with cross-curricular state standards, and they should describe the most essential skills and habits of work that students will need to succeed in adult life. Students demonstrate achievement of cross-curricular graduation standards through a body of evidence, such as portfolios, exhibitions, or capstone projects that are evaluated using common rubrics.

Content-Area Graduation Standards are aligned with state standards and learning progressions, and they describe the most essential content knowledge that students will need to succeed in adult life. Students demonstrate achievement of content-area graduation standards through their aggregate achievement of performance indicators over time.

> In general, the measurement of progress on graduation standards is determined at the end of elementary school (grade 5) and middle school (grade 8), and the final achievement of graduation standards is determined at the end of high school (grade 12). School districts may choose to structure their standards progressions differently or use different grade levels for measurement of progress.

Performance Indicators are aligned with content-area and cross-curricular state standards, and they provide more detailed descriptions of what it means to meet a graduation standard. Achievement of performance indicators may be determined using summative assessments—either common school-wide assessments for a content area and grade level, or course assessments developed by individual teachers. Over time, a student's aggregate performance on summative assessments determines whether performance indicators have been met.

Learning Objectives are aligned with state standards and guide the design of curriculum units intended to move students toward proficiency and the achievement of performance indicators. Achievement of unit-based learning objectives is determined using formative assessments, and teacher feedback prepares students for summative assessments. Teachers provide students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate their emerging proficiency.