



# TALKING ABOUT PROFICIENCY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

 #MPA16

all materials at:  
[greatschoolspartnership.org/mpa-2016](https://greatschoolspartnership.org/mpa-2016)



GREAT  
SCHOOLS  
PARTNERSHIP

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## WHO WE ARE

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[www.greatschoolspartnership.org/mpa-2016](http://www.greatschoolspartnership.org/mpa-2016)

# Outcomes

I can describe the core elements about communicating with the public about my school/district

# Outcomes

I can identify next steps I can take now to effectively communicate our school/district's work.

# Agenda



Who We Are and What We Believe

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Biggest Communication Challenges

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Core Principles + Entry Points

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Resources



Is a non-profit support organization based in Portland working nationally with schools, districts and state agencies, providing coaching, and developing tools.



GSP has assisted the **Maine Principals' Association** with the Summer Leadership Retreat since 2013.



# We Believe

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In equitable, personalized, rigorous learning for **all students** leading to readiness for college, careers, and citizenship

# We Believe

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That schools must simultaneously attend to  
**policy, practice, and community engagement**

# We Believe

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School improvement is **context-based**,  
not one-size fits all

**What is  
Proficiency-  
Based Learning?**



# PUBLIC PERCEPTION

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# Phi Delta Kappa-Gallup

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Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the  
Public Schools



75% Public schools = stink



50% Local public schools = great





75% My kid's school = great



# Greatest Hurdles

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With respect to your proficiency-based learning work, what is the great communication hurdle you are facing?

# THREE CORE PRINCIPLES

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1. Why It Matters
2. Specificity
3. Metaphors



“We’re going to be  
formatively assessing  
your child throughout  
the school year.”



**Process**

“We’re going to make sure your child has actually learned what he was taught.”

**Goal**



# WHY IT MATTERS

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...for your audience

...for students

...for your community

...for society

# w/o **EDUCATION**

Violence, crime, genocide, war

Oppression of women, minorities, etc.

Tyranny, authoritarian governments

Mass censorship, government propaganda

Poverty, hunger, humanitarian disasters

Failed states, social instability, chaos

## w/ **EDUCATION**

Food, plumbing, water, civic infrastructure

Democracy, independent media, free speech

Lower crime, incarceration rates

More jobs, higher incomes and tax revenues

People are healthier, report being happier

More voting, charity, volunteerism



# START

HOW GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE  
EVERYONE TO TAKE ACTION

# WITH

SIMON SINEK

# WHY

WITH A NEW  
PREFACE  
AND  
AFTERWORD



Photo credit Lani Berry via prweb.com

**WHY PROFICIENCY-  
BASED LEARNING?**

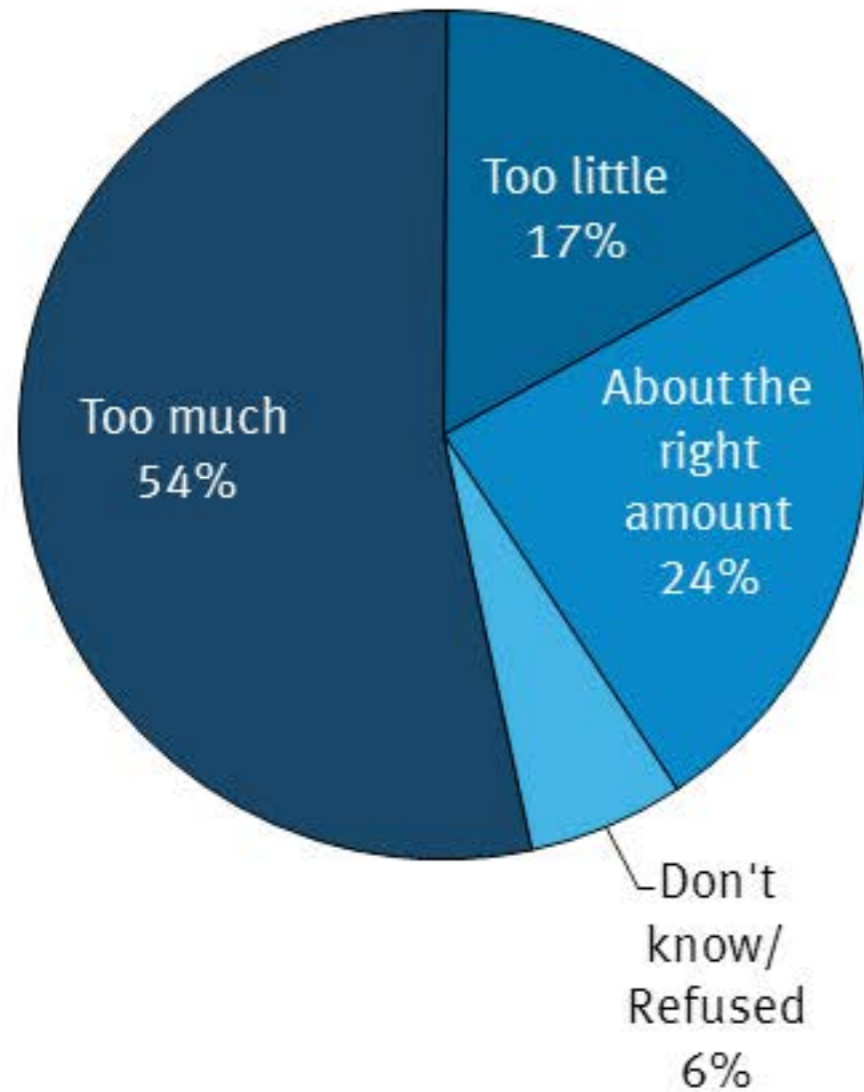
Project-Based Learning

**AVOID ABSTRACTIONS**

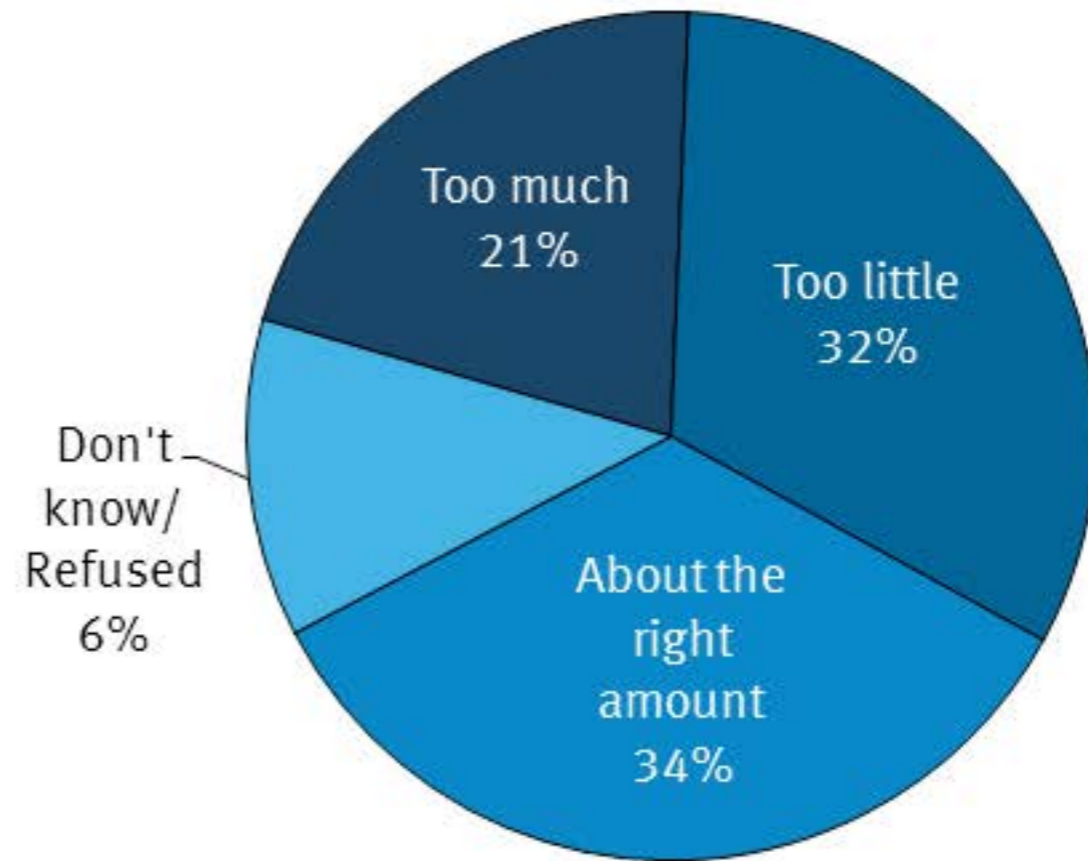
# EMBRACE SPECIFICITY



**Do you think the U.S. is now spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on foreign aid?**

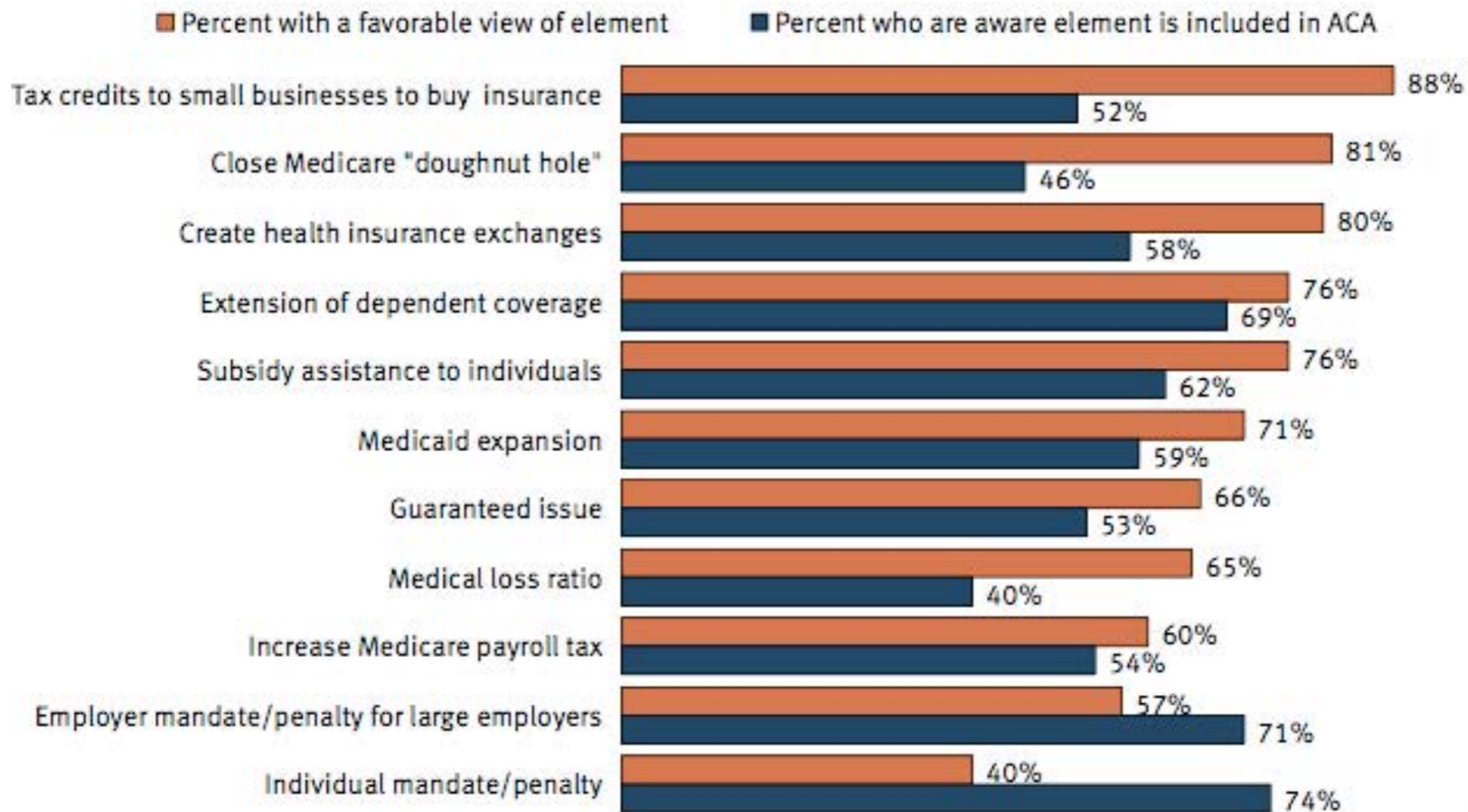


**Do you think the U.S. is now spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on efforts to improve health for people in developing countries?**



SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2012 Survey of Americans on the U.S. Role in Global Health (conducted February 2-12, 2012).

Percent who say they feel favorable about each of the following and percent who say they are aware each is included in the health reform law:



NOTE: Items asked of separate half samples. Question wording abbreviated. See topline (<http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/8425.cfm>) for complete wording.

SOURCE: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll (conducted March 5-10, 2013)



Specificity is a pathway to **understanding**



Our future prosperity will not be built on low standards or unprepared graduates.

**When every student graduates prepared**, only then will we know that our future is in good hands, and that we have guaranteed every citizen's universal right to a great education.



It is not enough that we simply teach our students the most critically important knowledge and skills — **we also need to make sure they have learned them.**

It is no longer good enough to push students through the system with Cs and Ds, and then send them off into adult life **unprepared to succeed** in an entry-level job or a first-year college course.

Every high school diploma awarded by our school **will certify readiness for life.** Our school is not going to graduate students who are barely literate, who can't do basic math, or who struggle to write a grammatical sentence.

**HOW MIGHT YOU ADD  
SPECIFICITY?**

# Standards

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# Curriculum

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing and speaking.



# Standards

finish line  
the goal  
3 inches  
a moment

---

# Curriculum





Photo credit Martinec from Lille, France, via Wikipedia Commons

# Standards

finish line  
3 inches  
the goal  
a moment

---

# Curriculum

marathon  
26 miles  
the race  
a journey

# Curriculum

knowledge

skills

topics

concepts

examples

stories

lessons

units

assignments

projects

readings

materials

videos

research

Demonstrate understanding of how the principles of “checks and balances” and “separation of powers” work in American government

# Teachers

historical examples  
learning materials  
texts/videos/websites  
teaching approaches  
tests/assessments  
& everything else



# Learning

is like training

conditioning  
commitment  
dedication  
endurance  
failures  
successes  
growth  
progress  
improvement  
accomplishment  
satisfaction  
fulfillment  
self-belief

**WHAT METAPHORS RING  
TRUE FOR YOUR  
COMMUNITY?**

# FOUR THINGS YOU CAN DO





BREAKING

BREAKING NEWS/BREAKING NEWS

**BREAKING  
NEWS NOW**

**ON YOUR SIDE**

**#1 Proactive Media Briefing**

## **King TV**

Expedition Videos, Media, and Independent Student Projects

**Featured Video: *Principal Mike McCarthy Explains King's Transition to Standards-Based Grading***



# **#2 Proactive Community Briefing**

# EDUCATION REFORM

FOR JOURNALISTS, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Created by the Great Schools Partnership, the GLOSSARY OF EDUCATION REFORM defines and describes widely used school-improvement terms, concepts, and strategies for journalists, parents, and community members. | [Learn more »](#)

Search »



SHARE



## PROFICIENCY-BASED LEARNING

LAST UPDATED: 10.24.13

The term **proficiency-based learning** refers to systems of instruction, [assessment](#), grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education. In most cases, proficiency-based systems use state [learning standards](#) to determine academic expectations and define "[proficiency](#)" in a given course, subject area, or grade level.

### ALPHABETICAL SEARCH

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P

# #3 Proactively Define All Terms



# 11 WAYS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Glossary of Education Reform was created, in part, to help educators communicate more effectively with their communities and [stakeholders](#). The website currently features 428 terms and more than 110 in-depth entries on many of the most popular and talked-about school-improvement terms, concepts, and strategies in the United States. All of the entries are written for a general audience in non-technical language, and they provide a concise yet detailed introduction to a wide variety of educational topics. In other words, the Glossary is far more than your typical glossary.

To help educators use the Glossary as a school communications tool, we created the following guide. While the recommendations are focused on schools, any educational institution or organization will be able to apply the strategies. If we have overlooked anything, please let us know by submitting your suggestions [here](#).

1. **Link to entries on your website or blog.** If you are explaining a new school-improvement initiative, whether it's [project-based learning](#) or [professional learning communities](#), consider including links to Glossary entries on your website or school blog. Explaining the technical nuances of a new strategy in accessible language can take a lot of time and thought, and it often proves to be trickier than it appears. If our entries are relevant and useful to your school-communications work, let us do some of the work for you. You can link specific terms on your website or direct visitors to our entries if they want to learn more about a particular concept or strategy.
2. **Incorporate entries into social media.** Does your school have a Facebook page? Do you tweet? If so, consider posting or tweeting Glossary entries from time to time as a way to build greater understanding of specific school-

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Letter</b>	<b>Honors</b>
4	w/ Great Honors	A+	Summa Cum Laude
3.8–3.9	w/ High Honors	A	Magna Cum Laude
3.5–3.7	w/ Honors	A-	Cum Laude
3.3–3.4	w/ Distinction	B+	
3.0–3.2	Proficient	B	
2.8–2.9	Mostly Proficient	C+	
2.5–2.7	Partially Proficient	C	
1.0–2.4	Not Proficient		

# #4 Proactive Grade Reporting

# INITIAL SCHOOL+COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Values/PBL</b>	<b>Concerns/PBL</b>
<b>Faculty</b>				
<b>Students</b>				
<b>Families</b>				
<b>School Board</b>				
<b>Community Members</b>				

# INITIAL SCHOOL+COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Values/PBL</b>	<b>Concerns/PBL</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	student ownership	lack of motivation	multiple ways to demonstrate learning	motivation linked to mastery and purpose
<b>Students</b>				
<b>Families</b>				
<b>School Board</b>				
<b>Community Members</b>				

Tools + Resources





- Maine DOE Home
- Students & Families
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Communities
- Inside DOE



## Getting to PROFICIENCY

Helping Maine Graduate Every Student Prepared

Getting to Proficiency provides technical assistance, resources and guidance for school districts to implement the proficiency-based diploma, and to do so in a way that promotes student learning and achievement of the Maine Learning Results. [Learn More](#)

Newsroom | A-Z Index | Popular Pages

- [Maine students show improved proficiency in math, reading](#)
- [Educators help develop formative assessment digital library](#)
- [Upcoming events provide dyslexia information](#)
- [ELA teachers to host colleagues for teacher-led discussion of next generation assessments](#)
- [New toolkit measures alignment of materials to standards](#)
- [More News](#)
- [Weekly Commissioner's Update](#)
- [Administrative Letters](#)

## EducationEvolving Maine's Plan for Putting Learners First

Click on the core priorities below to learn more about putting our plan into practice and serving the needs of all learners.

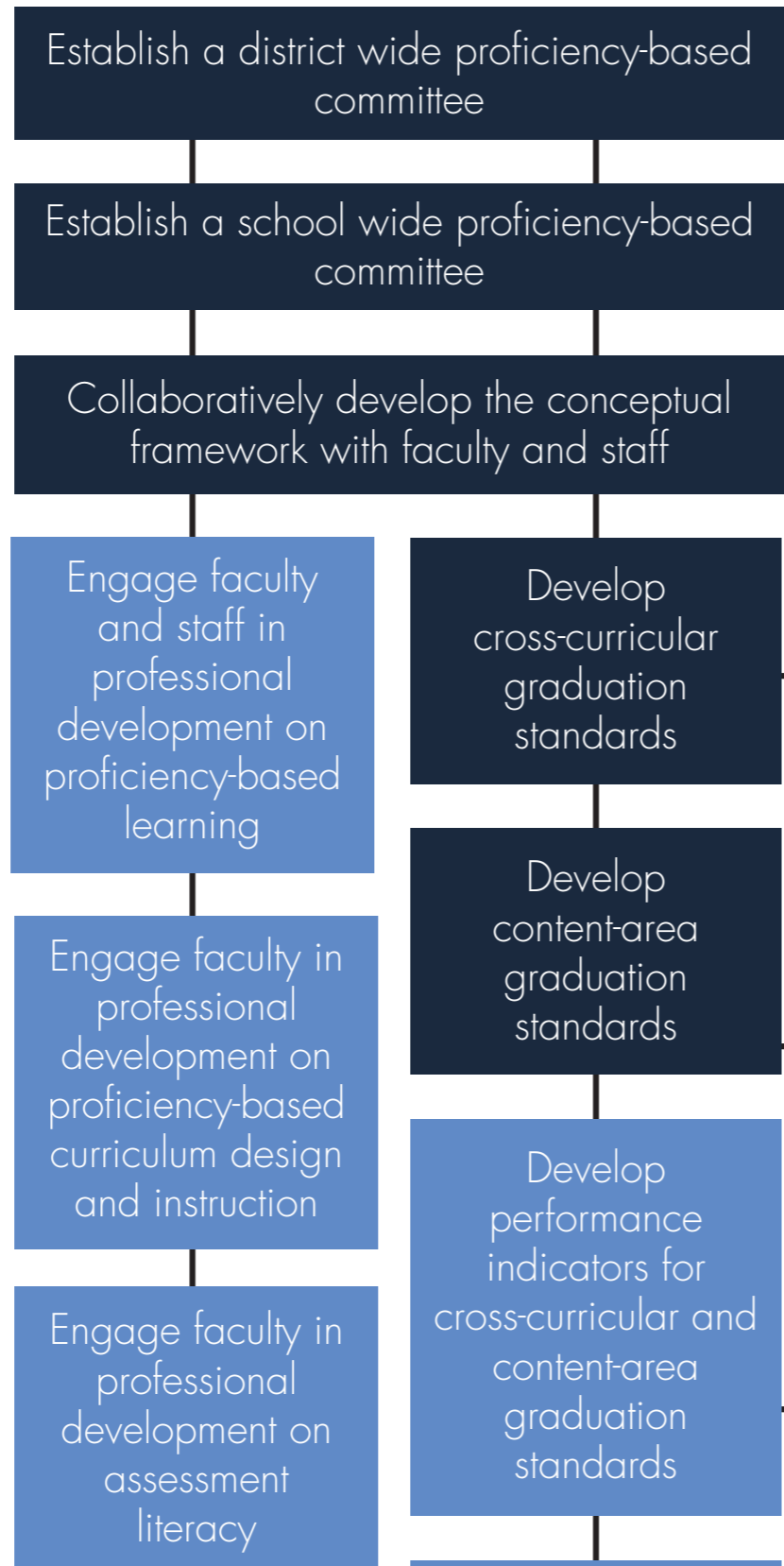


# Planning for Proficiency-Based Learning

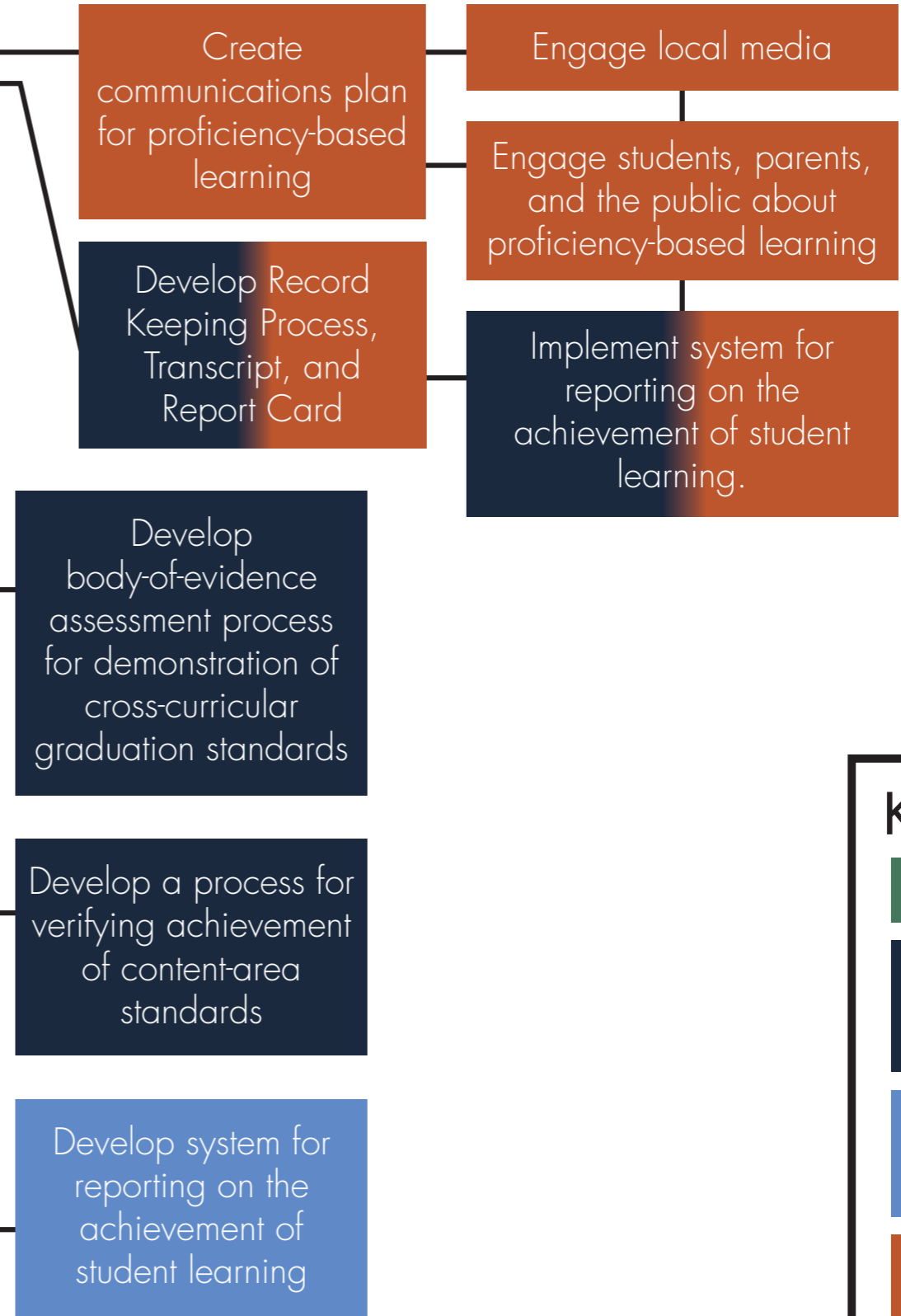
## POLICY



## PRACTICE



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



### KEY

- Policy
- Practice: Graduation Requirements
- Practice: Instructional System
- Community Engagement

# Higher Ed Endorsement

<http://newenglandssc.org/resources/collegiate-support/>

This endorsement recognizes that strong educational preparation benefits our students, our faculty, and our institution, and toward these ends we strongly support proficiency-based teaching practices, assessments, report cards, graduation decisions, and other strategies that can increase student preparation for higher education, modern careers, and lives of active, informed citizenship.



*Agreed on this Day  
October 24, 2012*



*Rosa S Redonnett*

Rosa S. Redonnett  
Chief Student Affairs Officer



# Profile | Transcript



Every student graduates prepared for college, career, and global citizenship

## MISSION

Merrymeeting High School is committed to ensuring that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills required to succeed as contributing citizens in the 21st century.

## THE SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY

Merrymeeting High School is a regional public high school serving three suburban-rural communities in southern Maine. The tourist area has attracted new families with varied cultural backgrounds, and our community has grown increasingly diverse over the past decade. In addition, a growing retirement population has taken on a strong presence and voice in our community and school affairs. Employment opportunities for the parents of Merrymeeting students center on the local hospitality industry, including many new small businesses. A significant percentage of residents commute to Portland, Portsmouth (New Hampshire), and as far as Boston on a daily basis for work. Family incomes vary widely, but most of our students hail from households of modest means. Support for education is on the rise and budgets, while adopted without much opposition, reflect the modest incomes of the region.

For more information: [merrymeetinghs.org/our-community](http://merrymeetinghs.org/our-community)

## THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Designed to motivate and challenge all students, the academic program at Merrymeeting High School is driven by equity and the highest possible learning expectations for students. Our proficiency-based learning and graduation policies ensure that all students leave as highly literate and skilled graduates. During their high school career, students have access to a wide range of learning experiences, including Advanced Placement courses and dual-enrollment opportunities at local colleges. A year-long, interdisciplinary capstone project culminates the secondary school experience. All students are required to demonstrate proficiency against consistently applied and assessed learning standards, which are documented using digital portfolios that students maintain as evidence of their learning progress and achievements. All learning experiences are academically rigorous and intended to prepare students for success in college, career, and citizenship.

For more detailed information: [merrymeetinghs.org/academic-program](http://merrymeetinghs.org/academic-program)

### Highlights of the Academic Program

- Students take in-depth courses in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies all four years of high school.
- Dual-enrollment (early college) courses are available to all students and completed by 60% of graduates on average.
- Internships are available to all students through established school-community partnerships with local businesses and organizations.
- Advanced Placement courses in English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Statistics, Calculus, American History, United States Government and Politics, Macroeconomics, Chemistry, and Biology, are open to all tenth through twelfth grade students. On average 65% of graduates complete at least one AP course.
- Project-based learning is embedded throughout the curriculum, and most courses engage students in long-term investigative projects, which often address local issues affecting the community.
- Online courses are available to all students and reflect the same high academic standards as regular courses. All students must complete at least one online course before graduation.
- All students complete a community service requirement before graduating.
- The Merrymeeting Honor Pledge helps students become ethical and responsible citizens in the school and community.

## CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

**Athletics:** field hockey | football | soccer | ice hockey | basketball | cross country | alpine and nordic skiing | track | baseball | softball | lacrosse

**Activities:** drama club | math team | robotics team | student government | chorus | concert band | environmental club | school newspaper | debate

## Bigelow High School



Mountain Rd., Dead River, Maine 04000

Phone:

Website:

## Student Personal Information

Date of Birth:  
Parent/Guardian:

Date of Enrollment:  
Date of Graduation:

Address  
Contact Info

Learning Experience	Level of Proficiency	Duration	Type
<b>2009-10</b>			
English 9	3.5	Year	Honors
History 9	3.0	Year	Course
Geometry	3.0	Year	Course
Spanish I	3.5	Year	Course
Earth Science	3.0	Year	Course
Art 1	3.0	Year	Course
<b>2010-11</b>			
English 10	3.5	Year	Course
History 10	4.0	Year	Honors
Algebra II	4.0	Year	Course
Spanish II	3.5	Year	Course
Chemistry	4.0	Year	Honors
Drama	4.0	Semester	Course
<b>2011-12</b>			
English Language and Composition (AP)	3.5	Year	Honors
US History	3.0	Year	Independent
Calculus	3.5	Year	Course
Spanish III	3.5	Year	Course
Physics	3.5	Year	Course
Software Development, Inc.	3.5	Year	Internship
<b>2012-13</b>			
English 101	4.0	Semester	Dual Enrollment
Mountain Biotech Industries (STEM)	3.5	Year	Internship
Physical Education	4.0	Semester	Course
Statistics (AP)	3.8	Year	Course
Health	4.0	Semester	Course
Psychology (AP)	4.0	Semester	Honors

Graduation Cross-Curricular Skills	Level of Proficiency
<b>Maine Learning Results Guiding Principles</b>	
Clear and effective communicator	3.0
Self-directed and lifelong learner	3.25
Creative and practical problem solver	3.50
Responsible and involved citizen	3.75
Integrative and informed thinker	4.0

Student Proficiency is verified by numerous demonstrations pertaining to these skills, not one time events

## Academic Summary

GPA: 3.75  
Magna Cum Laude  
SAT Scores  
Academic Awards  
Academic Recognition

## Grading System

1.0 - Does not meet standards  
2.0 - Partially meets standards  
3.0 - Meets standards  
3.25 - 3.50 - Exceeds standards  
3.75 - 4.0 - Exceeds standards with honors

## Graduation Requirements

**Demonstrated Proficiency -**  
Maine Guiding Principles  
English Language Arts  
Mathematics  
Science and Technology  
Social Studies  
Health Education and Physical Education  
World Languages  
Visual and Performing Arts  
Career Education and Development

## Additional Graduation Requirements

Senior Project  
Capstone Experience  
Service Learning Requirement

## SCHOOL PROFILE

### MERRYMEETING HIGH SCHOOL

123 School Street  
Merrymeeting, Maine 04000  
[merrymeetinghs.org](http://merrymeetinghs.org)

#### John Doe

Principal  
[john.doe@merrymeetinghs.org](mailto:john.doe@merrymeetinghs.org)

#### Jane Doe

Director of Guidance  
[jane.doe@merrymeetinghs.org](mailto:jane.doe@merrymeetinghs.org)

#### Sarah Doe

College and Career Counselor  
[sarah.doe@merrymeetinghs.org](mailto:sarah.doe@merrymeetinghs.org)

## STANDARDS-BASED GRADING SYSTEM

Merrymeeting High School's standards-based grading system ensures that all students demonstrate achievement of critical learning standards.

1.0: Does not meet standards  
2.0: Partially meets standards  
3.0: Meets standards  
3.25-3.50: Exceeds standards  
3.75-4.0: Exceeds standards with honors

### Habits of Work Grades

In addition to being graded on academic performance, students receive Habits of Work (HOW) grades related to attendance, participation, effort, and other behaviors critical to academic and life success.

For more information:  
[merrymeetinghs.org/grading](http://merrymeetinghs.org/grading)

# LEADERSHIP IN ACTION

a briefing series for new england's educational leaders

## How Does Proficiency-Based Learning Work?

How is it possible that a student can graduate from high school and yet be unable to read or write well, do basic algebra and geometry, identify major countries on a map, understand how our political system works, or explain the scientific method? While it may be difficult to believe, countless students graduate from high schools every year without the fundamental knowledge and skills they will need to earn a college degree, succeed in the modern workplace, or contribute meaningfully to their communities. How is this possible?

The answer is that many schools do not use teaching, testing, grading, and reporting methods that require students to prove they have actually acquired the most critically important knowledge and skills. In fact, high schools give out thousands of grades, report cards, and diplomas every year, but many of them would not be able to tell you what their students have specifically learned or not learned.

Luckily, there's an alternative option for today's schools: **proficiency-based learning**.

## How It Works

- ✓ **All students must demonstrate what they have learned before moving on.** Before students can pass a course, move on to the next grade level, or graduate, they must demonstrate that they have learned what they were expected to learn. If students fail to meet learning expectations, they are given more support and instruction from teachers, more time to learn and practice, and more opportunities to demonstrate progress. Until they acquire the most essential skills and grasp the most important concepts, students do not move on to the next level.
- ✓ **Teachers are very clear about what students need to learn.** In every class, students know precisely what teachers expect—no guesswork required. The learning expectations for the course are

**What is  
Proficiency-  
Based Learning?**





GREAT  
SCHOOLS  
PARTNERSHIP

# QUESTIONS

[greatschoolspartnership.org](http://greatschoolspartnership.org)





# THANK YOU

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