

WHY PROFICIENCY EDUCATION

The idea of improving our education system to ensure that students reach proficiency in the skills they need for college and careers is not unique to Oregon or Bethel. In other states it may be called competency-based, mastery-based or performance-based education, but it all speaks to one goal – *to lift academic expectations while ensuring that every student reaches them.*

The concept is simple: *Learning is best measured by students demonstrating that they have reached a certain level of knowledge and skills as articulated by their grade level or course standards.*

Application of lifelong learning skills and academic content

- Students gain the academic and lifelong learning skills they will need to be successful in an ever-changing world, while experiencing a variety of ways to learn and to demonstrate their learning.
- Deeper learning is emphasized through the application of knowledge.
- Students become prepared for college and careers by developing necessary lifelong learning skills that are needed to master academic knowledge and skills such as problem solving, communication, collaboration, teamwork, and persistence.
- Teachers provide students on-going feedback and extra support to become proficient.
- Students get the instructional support they need to succeed, even if it takes them multiple attempts and time to reach proficiency.

Why It Matters

- About 1 million students a year leave high school without a diploma.
- 70% of higher education instructors say their students do not comprehend complex reading materials, 66% say student cannot think analytically.
- The current system allows students to progress because of age, not demonstrated ability. This is resulting in gaps – some small, some big, all damaging.
- More than one-third of American high school graduates who enter college are required to take remedial courses at a cost of over \$2 billion annually. Nearly four of every five of those students had a high school grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- Students, families and states bear the burden of a time-based education system.
- The United States has the second-highest college drop out rate among 27 countries.

Understanding A Proficiency-Based Model of Teaching and Learning

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, Power Standards for the course and Learning Targets are clearly described and communicated, and students know precisely where they stand throughout the course. Equally important, parents also know precisely what the student has learned and what she/he might be struggling to learn.

Transparency empowers student and expands learning

Engagement and motivation increases when students know what is expected of them and **what proficiency looks like**. Students work towards becoming proficient in the standards (CCSS and/or National) and other college and career-ready state standards. As a result, **students own their learning**, seeking ways to learn and demonstrate what they have learned in a fashion that is relevant to them.

Consistent methods are used to evaluate student learning

In a **non-proficiency model**, different learning expectations are applied from course to course, and different methods and criteria are used to evaluate what students have learned. On the other hand, Proficiency-based learning applies the same standards to all students, while teachers use consistent methods of evaluating and reporting student learning – everyone knows precisely what grades stand for and what each student has learned. As a result, grades mean the same thing from course to course, and schools can certify that students are prepared when they move on. The students' learning behaviors (such as homework completion) are reported separately.

Assessment and grading designed to help students learn

Students have multiple ways and multiple opportunities to demonstrate skills to reach proficiency. Teachers use consistent methods of assessing, and grades communicate how students are progressing. Summative assessments validate that students have either mastered the standards' content and skills or reached proficient levels to progress to the next course.

Strong cultures of learning and continuous improvement

Data about students' progress drives the professional development of teachers and continuous improvement of our schools. In a Proficiency-Based model, educators are constantly innovating to ensure students are engaged in school, successfully mastering the curriculum, and keeping pace on their way to graduation.