

Competency Education Continuum

Competency education represents a significant shift in teaching and learning. This shift does not happen overnight, it often takes years of planning and phased implementation for schools to implement a model with fidelity. The continuum below will help innovators and policymakers differentiate between full-scale competency models and those that have begun to pave the way for this work.

	Traditional	Emerging	Competency-Based
School Culture	Learning happens inside a traditional classroom with little to no accommodation of student interests and learning styles.	Educators make limited accommodation for student interests and learning styles by incorporating real-world experiences and partners into the classroom.	Students choose from a wide range of learning experiences at school, online, and in their community. Educators work with diverse partners and students to piece together individual learning pathways that accommodate student interests and learning styles.
Learning Progression	Students are expected to master grade level college and career ready standards.	Students are expected to master grade level college and career ready standards and transferable skills.	Students are expected to master competencies aligned to college and career ready standards. Each competency has clear, transferable learning objectives.
Learning Pace	Students advance at the instructor's pace regardless of whether they mastered the learning objectives or need additional time.	Students may take accelerated courses if they demonstrate readiness. Students receive specialized support when they fall behind peers. Educators continually group students to encourage peer learning and maximize learning gains for all.	Students receive customized supports and accelerated opportunity both in-school and out-of-school to ensure they stay on pace to graduate college and career ready.
Instruction	Every classroom has one teacher who designs and delivers an instructional program with very little differentiation for individual students.	Educators engage in some collaboration across teams and content areas to align and differentiate instruction based on real-time feedback on student performance.	Educators work collaboratively with each other, community partners, and students to develop a unique learning plan for every student based on student interests, learning styles, and real-time data.
Assessment System	Assessment instruments are used at set times to evaluate and classify students, not to guide instruction. Students have one opportunity to take the summative assessment at the end of the year.	Educators use formative assessment instruments when they believe students are ready to demonstrate mastery. These assessments help educators tailor instruction so that more students are ready to master the summative assessment at the end of the year.	A comprehensive assessment system is an essential part of the learning system. Formative assessments guide daily instruction and student selection of customized learning opportunities. Summative assessments show mastery of competencies. Students take these assessments when they are ready and have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery.
Grading Policies	Grades are norm-referenced, reflect mastery of course standards, and are typically based on weighted quarters and a final exam.	Grades reflect mastery of course standards and skills and are typically based on weighted quarters and a final exam or project. Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of required coursework.	Grades reflect the degree of mastery of competencies ranging from advanced to not yet competent. When students do not earn course credit their record indicates competencies that need to be re-learned instead of the entire course.