

## Continuity of Learning: Identifying Critical Proficiencies

### Purpose

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) has developed the following guidelines to assist schools and supervisory unions/districts (SUs/SDs) in identifying critical standards or proficiencies for students as schools stay closed due to COVID-19 for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year.

### Introduction

Proficiencies include explicit, measurable learning objectives based on standards, and measure a learner's knowledge and skill demonstrated in a consistent manner in various settings over time. Proficiencies are also referred to as competencies.

To support continuity of learning, "new learning" should center on high leverage concepts and skills that are identified as essential to readiness for future learning and grade promotion for the upcoming academic year. Critical proficiencies identify the essential knowledge, skills and abilities that teachers will focus on through the end of the school year.

A schoolwide/district-wide approach to determining critical proficiencies ensures consistency across grade levels and content areas within an SU/SD and reduces the opportunity for unintended equity gaps across student groups.

### Process for Identifying Critical Proficiencies or Standards

When identifying critical proficiencies, schools and SUs/SDs need to take a "less-is-more" approach. This requires collaboration between educators across the PK-12 continuum within any school or district. Teachers are critical stakeholders who, as grade-level and content experts, can inform how grade levels can be clustered (e.g., PK-elementary, middle grades, and high school) and when identifying which proficiencies meet the [selection criteria](#) detailed below.

### Selection Criteria

1. **Endurance:** Will the knowledge and skills associated with this proficiency be of value to students beyond the present?
2. **Leverage:** Is there crossover application within the content area and to other content areas (e.g., proficiency in creating and interpreting graphs, diagrams, and charts and subsequently making accurate inferences from them will help students in math, science, social studies, language arts and other areas)?

### Contact Information:

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3. **Readiness for the next level of learning:** Will proficiency provide students with the essential knowledge and skills that are necessary for future success (e.g., concepts and skills students need to enter a new grade level or course of study)?
4. **Career/College Relevance:** What are the concepts and performance tasks that students are most likely to encounter on standardized assessments, college entrance exams, and occupational competency exams (e.g., industry recognized credentials) students will need to prepare for (Ainsworth, 2013, pp. 25-27)?

### Considerations for Adapting to the Current Remote Learning Environment

- The number of proficiencies need to be responsive to new remote learning schedules.
- Students will need a variety of instructional and assessment techniques that acknowledge the current learning environment (e.g., take into consideration family illness, disrupted schedules, slow or no internet).
- Meet students where they are at. Some students may have already met critical proficiencies prior to March 18, 2020, some students may be on target and some students may have gaps. Differentiated learning, additional supports and enrichment activities should be integrated into instructional design.
- Leverage existing structures such as Education Support Teams (ESTs) and encourage collaborative teaming structures (e.g., special educators, school counselors and school health professionals) to provide students with additional support(s) needed to meet critical proficiencies.
- Take into account the maximum amount of time students are engaged in remote learning each day as well as the stress level some students may be experiencing.

The following recommendations and guidelines are presented as suggested minimum and maximum times of engagement by each student in remote learning activities.

Grade Level	Minimum	Maximum	Recommended Length of Sustained Attention
PreK	20 minutes/day	60 minutes/day	3-5 minutes
K	30 minutes/day	90 minutes/day	3-5 minutes
1-2	45 minutes/day	90 minutes/day	5-10 minutes
3-5	60 minutes/day	120 minutes/day	10-15 minutes
6-8	Class: 15 minutes/day Total: 90 minutes/day	Class: 30 minutes/day Total: 180 minutes/day	1 subject area of class
9-12	Class: 20 minutes/day Total: 120 minutes/day	Class: 45 minutes/day Total: 270 minutes/day	1 subject area of class

[Remote Learning Recommendations During Covid-19, p. 17](#)

**If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact the following AOE staff from the Student Pathways Division:**

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**Resources:**

Ainsworth, L. (2013) [Priority Standards: The Power of Focus](#)

Illinois Department of Education, [Remote Learning Recommendation During COVID-19](#)

Vermont Agency of Education - Continuity of Learning: [Assessment in a Remote Learning Environment Recommended Practices](#)

Vermont Agency of Education – Continuity of Learning: [Instruction in a Remote Learning Environment: Universal Principles and Recommended Practices](#)

Vermont Agency of Education – Continuity of Learning: [State and National Assessments and College Admission: Timelines, Schedules and Resources](#)