

What is Proficiency-Based Learning?

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Proficiency-based learning (PBL) centers on demonstrations of specific and transparent learning outcomes in which learning is the constant and time is the variable. When an education system is grounded in PBL, students not only gain the academic and transferrable skills, abilities, and knowledge required for different content areas, but more importantly, the ability to apply their learning in novel and cross-disciplinary contexts necessary for success in career, college, and civic life. Proficiency-based education ensures that all students have the opportunity to be fully engaged and supported in authentic, rigorous learning inside and outside the classroom.

Characteristics of Proficiency-Based Learning

- Students make important decisions about learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will [demonstrate their learning](#), thus developing ownership, independence, and responsibility.
- Assessment is a meaningful and empowering learning experience for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable [feedback](#).
- Students receive relevant, varied instruction and timely, differentiated [support](#) based on their individual learning [needs](#).
- Student progress is based on [evidence](#) of proficiency, rather than level of participation, effort, or time spent in the classroom.
- Students learn actively using different [pathways](#) and varied pacing.
- Strategies to ensure [equity](#) for all students are embedded in the culture, structure, and pedagogy of schools and education systems.
- [Learning targets](#) are rigorous, common expectations for learning that clarify what to learn, how deeply to learn it, and how to demonstrate evidence of new learning.

Graduation and Personalization

Proficiency-based graduation requirements (PBGRs) developed by Supervisory Unions/Districts (SU/SDs) are based on standards adopted by the State Board of Education, aligned with the content areas and transferable skills outlined in the [Education Quality Standards \(EQS\)](#), and with the support of a [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate](#). Instructional practices promote personalization to enable each student to successfully engage in the curriculum and meet the graduation requirements through [flexible and multiple pathways](#). Personalized Learning Plans

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(PLPs) help facilitate the collection of evidence of learning over time. PLPs reflect opportunities for flexibility in where, when, and how students learn, including activities that take place outside the school building and school day.

SUs/SDs and schools working to implement proficiency-based learning models will have the greatest impact on student learning when integrating all of these elements into practice. This student-centered learning approach is critical to high quality implementation.

References

[Acts 77 & 173](#)

[Aurora Institute](#)

[Six Core Features of Competency-Based Education Classrooms \(AIR\)](#)

[Vermont Education Quality Standards](#)

[Vermont Portrait of a Graduate](#)