

# Status of Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements in Vermont High Schools

**Education Quality Standards**  
Sections: 2120.5, 2120.7, & 2120.8

**REPORT**

12/4/17

Report to the State Board of Education

**Submitted by Proficiency-Based Learning Team Leader**

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to share the status of proficiency-based graduation requirements (PBGRs) throughout Vermont high schools. The Education Quality Standards (EQS) state that all Vermont students will graduate in a proficiency-based system by the year 2020 (EQS, 2120.7). Although there are many pieces that need to be in place in order to meet this goal, proficiency-based graduation requirements are a key component. Students, their families, and educators need to have a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills and abilities that students will need in order to graduate. This report provides data regarding where SUs/SDs are in the process of constructing PBGRs. Additionally, resources are included in the Appendices as evidence of work that is currently happening across Vermont.

## **What are Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements?**

Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements are the locally-delineated set of content knowledge and skills connected to state standards that, when supplemented with any additional locally-developed requirements, have been determined to qualify a student for earning a high school diploma. Vermont's EQS require that schools' graduation requirements be rooted in demonstrations of student proficiency, as opposed to time spent in classrooms. This requirement will take effect in Vermont beginning with the graduating class of 2020.

## **Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Data**

In the spring of 2017, superintendents were asked to send their PBGRs to the Agency of Education (AOE). Two additional waves of data were collected. The AOE team reviewed submitted documents and conducted a qualitative analysis.

As this is the first review of PBGRs, we are cautious about drawing conclusions that are too firm. The PBGR data provided here reflects the analysis of materials submitted to the AOE; it is likely that school systems have supplemental documents that would provide evidence of PBGR implementation that they did not think to share with us. In addition, because PBGRs are a local responsibility, language for similar components varies throughout the state, and coding could be mistaken. The AOE suspects that some school systems will likely provide additional clarification around their documents that would result in modifications to their classification. As a result, this data should be used for diagnostic purposes and as a baseline.

Each set of documents was reviewed by two different AOE staff members to determine answers to the following questions:

1. Do Vermont school systems have PBGRs in place for the class of 2020?
2. Do the PBGRs explicitly reference the Transferable Skills in EQS (i.e., communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, inquiry, problem solving and the use of technology)?
3. Do the PBGRs explicitly reference the content areas described in EQS?

The data related to these questions can be found in Appendix I.

## Findings

**Question 1:** Do Vermont school systems have PBGRs in place for the class of 2020?

**Answer:** Yes. Of the 49 school systems with a Vermont high school, 48 had some form of PBGRs in place for the class of 2020. Based on the materials that SUs/SDs have provided, it appears that Vermont educators are working extremely hard to move towards proficiency-based systems by 2020 and many currently have identified their PBGRs. There was a clear indication of movement towards proficiency-based systems rather than requirements based on seat time.

**Question 2:** Do the PBGRs explicitly reference the Transferable Skills in EQS (i.e., communication, collaboration, creativity, innovation, inquiry, problem solving and the use of technology)?

**Answer:** Yes, for the most part PBGRs are in place. In reviewing the PBGRs for Transferable Skills, it is interesting to note:

- Eighty-eight percent of PBGRs for Transferable Skills have a strong alignment with the AOE Sample Transferable Skills.
- Six percent of SUs/SDs with high schools are still in the process of developing PBGRs for Transferable Skills.
- Two percent of SUs/SDs with high schools have Transferable Skills that are partially aligned.
- Four percent of SUs/SDs have locally developed PBGRs for Transferable Skills that do not have a strong alignment with the AOE Sample Transferable Skills.

**Question 3:** Do the PBGRs explicitly reference the content areas described in EQS?

**Answer:** Yes, although there is some variation in the depth that was shared. In reviewing the PBGRs for evidence of content area proficiency, many also included performance indicators that provide more explicit information about what learners need to know, understand, and/or be able to do to demonstrate proficiency related to standards. Performance indicators are measurable and allow learners to demonstrate proficiency over time. We note:

- Seventy-nine percent of SUs/SDs created a clear list of content graduation proficiencies although not all included the performance indicators across content areas. (For an example with performance indicators, see Appendix II.)
- Eighteen percent of SUs/SDs embedded proficiencies or standards into coursework. (See Appendix III.)
- Two percent of SUs/SDs are currently developing content area PBGRs.
- Four percent of SUs/SDs have PBGRs that are partially aligned to the requirements in EQS. Some content areas are not complete.

**Note:** The data total is higher than 100% since some schools fit into more than one category. For instance, Windham Northeast SU has proficiencies embedded in PowerSchool, but also shared separate documents with PBGRs and performance indicators for content areas.

A number of school leaders shared that it was difficult to send a list of their proficiencies to the AOE since they were incorporated into PowerSchool. As one principal stated, "All of the proficiencies and proficiency indicators for each class which the teachers tie to graded assignments "live" actively in PowerSchool, as that is our vehicle for recording grades (PowerTeacher Pro.) So that is the location of the most accurate and current listing of proficiencies."

Some packets of information from SUs/SDs included graduation requirement policies. Additionally, some policies include a strategy for ensuring that students transferring from one system to another can use past achievements to demonstrate proficiency of graduation requirements. In order to support SUs/SDs that do not have similar policies in place, the Agency could potentially work collaboratively with the Vermont School Boards Association to provide examples from the field of model Proficiency-Based Learning (PBL) policies.

## **Conclusion**

There is a wider degree of variation in the quality and the depth of content PBGRs when compared to PBGRs for the Transferable Skills. PBGRs for Transferable Skills generally demonstrate a strong alignment to the AOE Sample Transferable Skills. The variation among content PBGRs could be due to information being omitted from the materials that were submitted to the Agency. A deeper look into the work of some SUs/SDs could clarify the actual components that schools have in place. Additionally, the following recommendations offer potential solutions for strengthening PBGRs.

## **Recommendations**

The Proficiency-Based Learning Team will support SUs/SDs in the transition to proficiency-based education by working collaboratively with the field to:

- Provide examples of strong proficiency-based graduation requirements that lead to college and career readiness.
- Facilitate the sharing of proficiency scales and rubrics.
- Provide examples of school websites that communicate PBGRs to families, students, and the public. (See [RNESU Proficiencies.](#))
- Share implementation plans and strategies for assessing growth over time. (See Appendix IV, V, VI, & VII.)
- Develop a Profile of a Vermont Graduate in order to create a shared understanding regarding the skills, knowledge, and abilities required for graduation and success in life.
- Facilitate a Peer Learning Community for Instructional Coaches and Teacher Leaders to provide them with the tools to be successful in supporting classroom teachers.
- Convey stories of success in our schools throughout the state (Vermont Professional Learning Network).
- Work with the Vermont School Boards Association to identify model school policies related to proficiency-based learning.

## Appendix I: SU/SD PBGR Data

### Codes:

**Yes:** There is evidence that the SU/SD is doing this to meet the EQS PBGR expectation.

**Developing:** There is evidence that the SU/SD is working to address this topic to meet the EQS expectation.

**P/A: Partial Alignment** to PBGR requirements in EQS.

**L/D: Locally Developed** PBGRs for Transferable Skills that may not reflect requirements in EQS (e.g., Habits of Work).

**N/A: Not Applicable** since there are no high schools in these SUs/SDs or the high school is in New Hampshire.

	Does the SU/SD have explicit PBGRs for Transferable Skills?	Does the SU/SD have explicit PBGRs for Content Areas <sup>1</sup> ?	Does the SU/SD embed PBGRs in Coursework?
Yes	43	39	9
Developing	3	1	0
P/A	1	2	0
L/D	2	-	-
No	0	0	0
N/A-No High School	8	8	8

	Does the SU/SD have explicit PBGRs for Transferable Skills?	Does the SU/SD have explicit PBGRs for Content Areas <sup>2</sup> ?	Does the SU/SD embed PBGRs in Coursework?
Addison Central SD	Yes		Yes
Addison Northeast SU	Yes	Yes	
Addison Northwest SU	Yes	Yes	
Addison Rutland SU	Yes	Yes	
Barre SU	L/D		Yes
Battenkill Valley SU	Yes	Yes	
Bennington-Rutland SU	N/A	N/A	N/A
Blue Mountain Union SD	Yes	Yes	
Burlington SD	Yes	Yes	
Caledonia Central SU	Yes		Yes
Caledonia North SU	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chittenden East SU	P/A	Yes	
Chittenden South SU	Yes		Yes
Colchester SD	Yes	Yes	
Essex-Caledonia SU	N/A	N/A	N/A
Essex North SU	Yes	Yes	
Essex Westford Ed Comm. Unified USD	Yes	Yes	

<sup>1</sup> (Literacy, Math, Science, Global Citizenship, Health/PE, & the Arts)

<sup>2</sup> (Literacy, Math, Science, Global Citizenship, Health/PE, & the Arts)

	Does the SU/SD have explicit PBGRs for Transferable Skills?	Does the SU/SD have explicit PBGRs for Content Areas <sup>2</sup> ?	Does the SU/SD embed PBGRs in Coursework?
Franklin Northeast SU	Yes	Yes	
Franklin Northwest SU	Yes	Yes	
Franklin West SU	Yes	Yes	
Grand Isle SU (No HS in district.)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hartford SD	Yes	Yes	
Lamoille North SU	Yes	Yes	
Lamoille South SU	Yes	Yes	
Maple Run Unified SD	Yes	Yes	
Mill River Unified Union SD	Yes	Yes	
Milton Town SD	Yes	Yes	
Montpelier SD	Yes		Yes
North Country SU	N/A	N/A	N/A
Orange East SU	Yes	P/A	
Orange North SU	Yes	P/A	
Orange Southwest SD	Yes	Yes	
Orleans Central SU	Yes		Yes
Orleans Southwest SU	Yes	Yes	
Rivendell Interstate SD	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rutland Central SU	Yes	Yes	
Rutland City SD	Yes	Yes	
Rutland Northeast SU	Yes	Yes	
Rutland Southwest SU	L/D		Yes
School Administrative Unit #70	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Burlington SD	Yes	Yes	
Southwest Vermont SU	Yes	Yes	
Springfield SD	Developing	Yes	
St. Johnsbury SD	N/A	N/A	N/A
Two Rivers SU	Yes	Yes	
Washington Central SU	Yes	Yes	
Washington Northeast SU	Yes	Yes	
Washington South SU	Yes	Yes	
Washington West SU	Yes	Yes	Yes
White River Valley SU	Yes	Yes	
Windham Central SU	Developing	Developing	
Windham Northeast SU	Yes	Yes	Yes
Windham Southeast SU	Yes	Yes	
Windham Southwest SU	Yes	Yes	
Windsor Central SU	Developing	Yes	
Windsor Southeast SU	Yes	Yes	
Winooski SD	Yes	Yes	

## Appendix II: Content Graduation Proficiencies with Performance Indicators



### English Language Arts High School Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements



**ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

- *Language is a powerful tool: what we read and hear can influence our thinking; what we write and say can influence the thinking of others.*
- *Literature communicates universal themes, ideas, and values that relate to our everyday lives.*

Graduation Proficiencies	Proficiency Indicators	Specific Learning Targets (From Courses)
(1) SPEAKING AND LISTENING: Employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences.	1.1 Listen actively and critically while collaborating in a range of conversations 1.2 Present their knowledge and ideas in a style appropriate to audience, purpose, and task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for discussion to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.</li> <li>• Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions with clear goals.</li> <li>• Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions and actively incorporating others into the discussion.</li> <li>• Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives by summarizing points, qualifying views, and making new connections.</li> <li>• Seek to understand other perspectives and cultures by communicating effectively.</li> <li>• Evaluate the speaker’s argument and approach.</li> <li>• Adapt speech to audience and occasion.</li> </ul>
(2) READING Comprehend,	2.1 Identify key ideas in a text and how they are developed 2.2 Recognize the craft and structure in a text and their	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use strong and thorough textual evidence, including primary and secondary sources.</li> </ul>

[Link to PBGRs](#)

## Appendix III: Content Graduation Proficiencies Integrated in Coursework

### Montpelier High School Program of Studies

## CREATIVE WRITING

(Fall and/or Spring)

### SUMMARY:

Creative Writing is available to juniors and seniors. Students may take the course either for a single semester or for the full year. First semester is devoted to studying the writing of poetry. Second semester is devoted to studying the writing of prose (short fiction and various creative non-fiction styles).

Through studying the works of others, submitting to writing exercises, studying vocabulary and grammar, and perfecting the fine art of revision, Creative Writing will challenge students to become literary artists. Emphasis will be placed on building a writing community, literary experimentation, attention to detail and precision, the business of authorship, and developing aesthetics.

### EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS:

Students will complete a piece of writing weekly in response to a writing exercise or other assignment. Students will share their writing with each other, and work toward ways of sharing it with larger audiences. The course encourages students to build a sense of personal aesthetics and to learn what subject matter motivates their best artistic writing. Work by other writers will be studied.

### ASSESSMENT:

Work will be collected in a growing portfolio, which will be periodically assessed by the student, the teacher, and possibly by peers.

### LEARNING EXPECTATIONS:

LE 2.5 Writing: **Voice/Tone**

LE 7.2 Creativity: **Risk Taking**

LE 5.7 Habits of Learning: **Preparedness**



## Appendix IV: Transferable Skills Rubric for Teachers/Mentors



Hartford High School  
Transferable Skill

### Communication Rubric

Teachers and students will be able to communicate their thoughts clearly and precisely with energy, passion and authentic voice.

Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Distinguished
<p><b>Mentor/Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I initiate communication opportunities.</li> <li>• I use traditional instructional methods in the classroom (lecture, direct instruction, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mentor/Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I create structures for students to articulate thoughts and ideas using oral and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.</li> <li>• I integrate multimedia and technology as a means of communication.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mentor/Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I model effective communication.</li> <li>• I create structures for students to apply and adapt communication for a range of purposes.</li> <li>• I provide opportunities for students to make connections beyond the classroom.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mentor/Teacher:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I model effective communication in multiple ways and for multiple purposes.</li> <li>• I provide opportunities for students to make global connections</li> </ul>
<p><b>Student:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I communicate when required.</li> <li>• I communicate minimally and rarely elaborate.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I initiate communication.</li> <li>• I communicate using a variety of techniques.</li> <li>• I communicate with others to complete tasks.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I initiate effective and authentic communication in real and non-real time.</li> <li>• I communicate with audiences within and beyond the classroom using a variety of platforms.</li> <li>• I listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Student:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I communicate effectively and in multiple ways and for multiple purposes.</li> <li>• I articulate thoughts and ideas effectively through a variety of forms and contexts.</li> <li>• I communicate for a range of purposes (e.g. to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade).</li> <li>• I use a variety of platforms to communicate and reflect on their effectiveness for the given audience.</li> <li>• I communicate effectively in diverse environments.</li> </ul>

## Appendix V: PBGR Implementation Rubric for Educators

### Brattleboro Union High School Proficiency Implementation Rubric 2016-17






	1-Emerging	2-Developing	3-Proficient	4-Exemplary
Instructional Planning	<p>Units not differentiated to address diverse learners</p> <p>Content proficiencies not addressed when planning</p> <p>Students have access to information through a single instructional practice (content, process and product)</p> <p>Assessment data not used to adjust instruction</p>	<p>Units differentiated to address only IEP, 504, and EST accommodations</p> <p>Teacher has started to make connections to content proficiencies</p> <p>Teachers identify unit outcomes that could be documented in a student's PLP</p> <p>Teacher reviews formative and summative assessment data</p>	<p>Units are accessible to all students</p> <p>Content standards and performance indicators embedded in the unit lessons</p> <p>Teachers plan units to include a variety of strategies to address all learning styles and identify where the lesson's content supports the PLP</p> <p>Analyzes and uses formative and summative student assessment data to adjust instruction</p> <p>Teachers use 3X3 planning model; each lesson includes 3 distinct activities</p>	<p>Units are accessible to all students and based on desired outcomes</p> <p>Planning is differentiated to incorporate student PLP</p> <p>Students can access information through a variety of self-selected strategies Opportunities for enrichment are evident in the unit/lesson plan</p> <p>Instructional planning is based on previous formative and summative assessment data.</p>

[WSESU Proficiency Implementation Rubric for 2016-2017](#)

# Appendix VI: PBGR Implementation with Flexible Pathways for Educators

## Two Rivers SU Flexible Pathways to Implementation

**BOOKMARK THIS PAGE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE!**

<p>Work with a special educator to <a href="#">shift or Expand</a> a verification criteria.</p> <p>Share your new scale with on our Google Plus Community.</p>	<p>Record yourself explaining to your students how verification criteria work</p>  <p>Post your recording on our Google Plus Community.</p>	<p>Gather exemplars from a performance task.</p> <p>Write a description of how you would use the exemplars as a teaching tool.</p>	<p>Read 6 articles from TRSU <a href="#">PBE Resource Page</a></p> <p>Write a reflection about ideas you have for implementation.</p>
<p>Design an interdisciplinary module.</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try it out.</li> <li>• Revise your module base on your learning.</li> <li>• Write a reflection and share it with your principal and curriculum coordinator</li> </ul>	<p><b>Welcome to Two Rivers' Flexible Pathway to Proficiency</b></p> <p><b>Use this Game Board to develop your skill and earn credit!</b></p>  <p>Rules:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have Fun!</li> <li>2. Complete 5 squares for 15 hours of PD. Complete 10 to meet the requirements for EDCA-615. (You do not have to go in any particular order.)</li> <li>3. Use the fill tool  to color in any box that you've completed.</li> <li>4. If you get stuck completing a box, find a colleague to help you.</li> <li>5. Still have questions? Post your questions <a href="#">HERE</a> on this Padlet.</li> </ol>		<p>Design a Module In your content area that only accesses a transferable skill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try it out.</li> <li>• Revise your module base on your learning.</li> <li>• Write a reflection and share it with your principal and curriculum coordinator</li> </ul> 
<p>Evaluate one of your modules using <a href="#">TRSU's Module Criteria</a></p> <p>Share your evaluation with your principal.</p> 			<p><a href="#">Write a Teacher's Statement</a> for a module you designed.</p> <p>Hang that statement with the student work produced in that module.</p>  <p>Take a picture and share it on Google Plus</p>
<p>Give feedback to a student based solely on the verification criteria you are using.</p> <p>Take a picture of some of the examples.</p> <p>Share them on Google Plus.</p>	<p>Develop an infographic for your parents that explains how proficiency works in your classroom.</p>  <p>Share it on Google Plus</p>	<p>Do something unexpected to advance or celebrate proficiency work in your classroom.</p> <p>Document it.</p> <p>Share it on Google Plus</p>	<p>Work with a coach:</p>  <p>Complete a coaching cycle with our PBE Coach.</p> <p>Write a Reflection and share it with your principal and the Curriculum Coordinator</p>

Inspired by Genevieve Piccolo and Jen Zengwill, Created by the RUSD TVTIP Department

### [Flexible Pathways to Implementation](#)

## Appendix VII: High School PBGR Implementation Timeline

### Draft: MVU Proficiency Based Graduation Requirement Transition Timeline

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-2021	2021-2022
All students	Essential Learning Outcomes are in place for all courses. All students are regularly assessed on the Transferable Skills based MVU Habits of Work.					
9th Grade	All students work under existing Graduation Requirements, demonstrating proficiency through course Essential Learning Outcomes.	9th grade students demonstrate proficiency of existing Graduation Requirements through course Essential Learning Outcomes and VT Transferable Skills by graduation.	9th grade students demonstrate proficiency of new Graduation Requirements and VT Transferable Skills by graduation.	9th & 10th grade students demonstrate proficiency of new Graduation Requirements and VT Transferable Skills by graduation.	9th-11th grade students demonstrate proficiency of new Graduation Requirements and VT Transferable Skills by graduation.	All students demonstrate proficiency of new Graduation Requirements and VT Transferable Skills by graduation.
10th Grade		10th-12th graders work under existing Graduation Requirements, demonstrating proficiency through course Essential Learning Outcomes.	10th grade students demonstrate proficiency of existing Graduation Requirements and VT Transferable Skills.			
11th Grade			11th & 12th graders work under existing Graduation Requirements.	11th grade students demonstrate proficiency of existing Graduation Requirements and VT Transferable Skills.		
12th Grade				12th graders work under existing Graduation Requirements.	12th grade students demonstrate proficiency of existing Graduation Requirements and VT Transferable Skills.	