

The Origins of Vermont's Proficiency-Based Learning Policy

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Transformation

- High Schools on the Move 2002
- Transformation Retreat and resulting report of the Transformation Policy Commission 2007/2008
- DOE creates Deputy Commissioner for Transformation
- Policy Research Team 2011

Relevant Statutory Language

- Act 176 (2006) – Established the High School Completion Program, and referenced “flexible pathways” for graduation
- Act 44 (2009) – Created goal of 100% high school graduation rate by 2020 and described “Flexible Pathways to Graduation” as a policy approach to achieve that goal
- [Act 77 \(2013\)](#) – contained four major components:
 - Flexible Pathways - Any combination of high-quality expanded learning opportunities, including academic and experiential components, to meet graduation requirements
 - Personalized Learning Plans (PLPs) – Created a requirement for each student in grades 7-12 to have a PLP. The PLP helps define the student’s pathway toward secondary school completion and postsecondary readiness.
 - Dual Enrollment - Enrollment by a secondary student in a course offered by an accredited postsecondary institution for which, upon successful completion of the course, the student will receive both secondary credit and postsecondary credit.
 - Early College – Enables students to simultaneously complete a high school diploma and the first year of college.

Relevant Regulatory Language

- Act 77 does not include language on PBL.
- In 2014, the SBOE adopted new [Education Quality Standards](#) (EQS) to replace the former School Quality Standards (SQS).
- The PBL requirement exists in State Board regulation under the EQS (specifically rules 2120.5 and 2120.7).
- The adoption of EQS can be seen as a regulatory shift towards a focus on outcomes as opposed to a focus on inputs under SQS.

Regulatory Timeline for PBL

In its regulation 2120.7, the SBOE establishes 2020 as the compliance deadline for PBL:

“A student meets the requirements for graduation when the student demonstrates evidence of proficiency in the curriculum outlined in 2120.5, and completion of any other requirements specified by the local board of the school attended by the student.

This requirement is effective no later than September 2014 for students entering seventh grade and through their secondary school progression, for the anticipated graduation date of June 2020, and with each subsequent incoming seventh grade class.”

PBL and Grading

There is no EQS regulation explicitly requiring the use of proficiency-based grading. In the definition section of these regulations, however, PBL is defined in #10 as follows:

"Proficiency-based learning" and "proficiency-based graduation" refers to systems of instruction, assessment, **grading and academic reporting** that are based on students demonstrating mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn before they progress to the next lesson, get promoted to the next grade level, or receive a diploma.

Summary

- PBL is part of a larger policy reform initiative designed to transform the high school experience for students to make learning more relevant and engaging for them.
- This reform initiative included several components. PBL is the only one of these components that exists solely in regulation.
- Although the regulatory requirements for PBL apply specifically to high school graduation requirements, they are also applicable to the regulation of elementary and middle level education since PBL is part of the larger EQS framework.