

IMPLEMENTING PROFICIENCY-BASED LEARNING IN VERMONT HIGH SCHOOLS

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RESEARCH CONTEXT

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How do Vermont teachers experience the shift to adopt and implement proficiency-based learning practices?
- 2) In what ways do Vermont district and school leaders support teachers with making sense of proficiency-based learning?
- 3) What similarities and differences exist between teachers within the same school and between schools in regard to their experiences implementing proficiency-based learning?

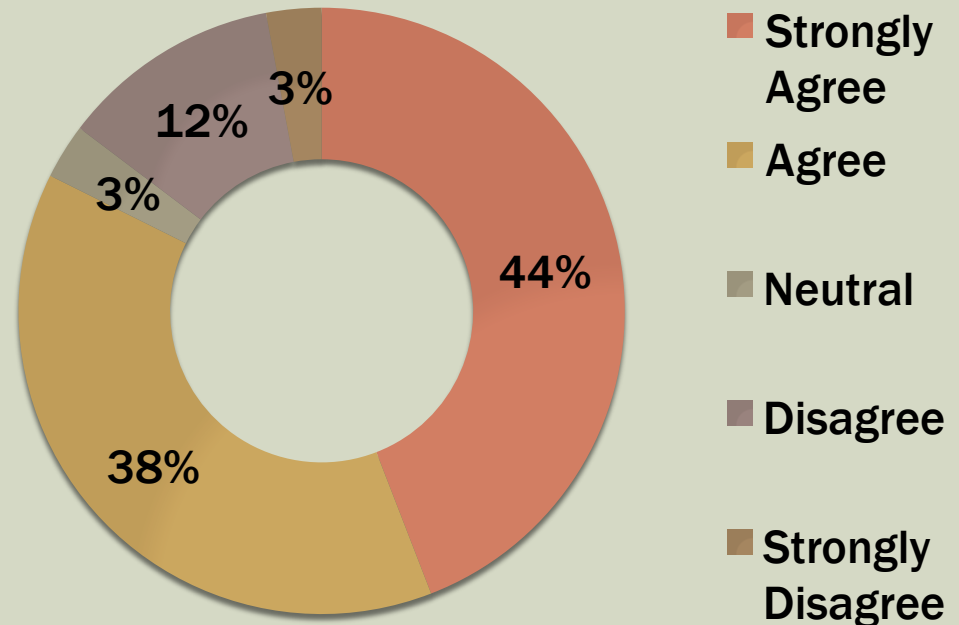
SELECTED FINDINGS

TEACHER EXPERIENCES

- Teacher's were overwhelmingly supportive of PBL, but indicated that some elements were challenging to implement → “Worthy but hard”
- Shifting mindsets and practices involved many changes, including:
 - Unpacking proficiencies into “learning targets”
 - Aligning assessments to proficiencies
 - Teaching & assessing “transferable skills”
 - Incorporating personalized learning strategies
 - Developing new unit plans
 - Modifying grading practices

TEACHER SURVEY RESPONSES

- To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement:
Proficiency-based learning is a promising approach to improve student learning.

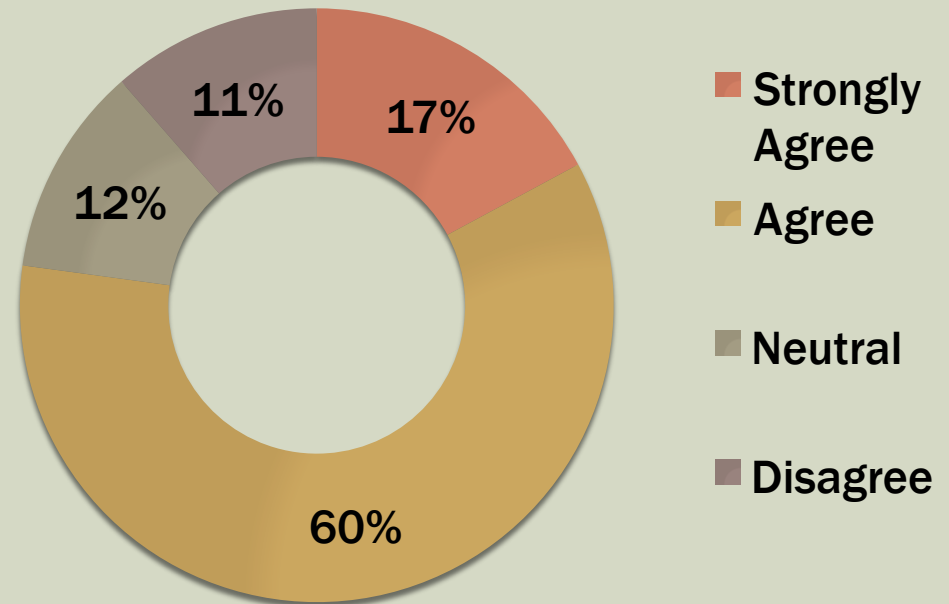


ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCES

- District and school leaders provided a variety of resources and learning opportunities that teachers found helpful with supporting their efforts to modify their classroom practices
- Resources included:
 - Professional learning communities
 - Collaborative time
 - Instructional coaches
 - Opportunities to attend workshops/conferences
 - Documents such as unit design templates & handbooks

TEACHER SURVEY RESPONSES

- To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statement:
I have had adequate training and professional development to implement proficiency-based learning well.



CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

KEY CONCLUSIONS

- Vermont high school teachers are actively engaged with implementing proficiency-based learning practices
- School and district leaders are diligently working to develop coherent “educational infrastructures” to support implementation efforts
- Each school/district has approached the adoption of proficiency-based learning in similar, yet different ways, engaging in a context-specific journey of implementation

IMPLEMENTATION REALITIES

- **Proficiency-based learning is a complex reform**
(Bryk, et al., 2015; Colby, 2017)
- **Requires all stakeholders to fundamentally change long-held assumptions, beliefs, values, and practices**
(Spillane, 2004; Tyack & Cuban, 1995)
- **PBL is a second-order change, involving both structural AND cultural shifts**
(DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Schneider, 2014)
- **Is a paradigm shift requiring a new mindset**
(Schimmer, 2016)

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Schools/districts need time to continue their implementation efforts
- Increased support is needed to better communicate the intent of proficiency-based learning so as to debunk persistent myths and reduce stakeholder confusion

QUESTIONS?