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**TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO:** Senate Education Committee

**FROM:** Jess DeCarolis, Student Pathways Division Director, Agency of Education  
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**TOPIC:** Proficiency-Based Grading and Transcripts: Professional Learning and Technical Assistance  
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### **Professional Learning Opportunities and Technical Assistance:**

**Networked Improvement Community for Instructional Coaches and Teacher-Leaders Series:** The goal of this community is to support coaches and teacher leaders. Networked Improvement Community (NICs) are communities grounded by shared goals, norms, theories and practices. They coordinate and accelerate learning through strategic knowledge management. Participating in this NIC will support continuous improvement planning and will facilitate meeting the required CFP evidence of impact. The community will meet three times throughout the year.

**New England Secondary School Consortium:** [The New England Secondary School Consortium](#) is a regional partnership that promotes forward-thinking innovations in the design and delivery of secondary education across New England. All six New England states—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont—work together to close persistent achievement gaps and promote greater educational equity and opportunity for all students.

**Personalized Learning and Flexible Pathways Showcase:** The League of Innovative Schools and the AOE hosted a Personalized Learning and Flexible Pathways Showcase. During the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, thirteen Vermont schools engaged in powerful work funded by the Agency of Education’s Flexible Pathways grants around Developing and Scaling Career Advisory; Integrating Expanded Learning Opportunities into Personalized Learning Plans; and Developing Work-Based Learning at the Secondary Level. Many of these schools went to Lake Morey to share their work, resources, and progress in these areas. Unlike past years, this event was open to non-LIS members in an effort to share information with as many people as possible, to generate deep discussion and new thinking, and to grow networks and learning communities.

**Professional Learning Network of Vermont:** [The Professional Learning Network](#) (VT-PLN) is a statewide system focused on supporting implementation of personalized, proficiency-based learning. The PLN was created to address the need for a coordinated, cohesive, and consistent approach to professional learning across the state with an emphasis on geographic equity and comparable quality articulated in one specific scope of work.

### [Expert Series:](#)

#### **Andrew Hargreaves Series:**

[Andrew Hargreaves](#) is an internationally- acclaimed education scholar with a focus on professional practice and teacher leadership for change. In his two-workshop series, he brought his expertise to Vermont to show how educators can best work together to leverage engagement and success for both students and teachers.

#### **Allison Zmuda Series:**

[Allison Zmuda](#) brought more than 17 years of experience as an education consultant specializing in student-centered learning. In her two-workshop series, she gave participants a clear overview of just what personalized learning is and how to adopt the dispositions necessary to make the most of this powerful framework.

Dr. Karin Hess: This series is designed for educators and school teams to join together to deeply examine assessment systems in their schools to support the implementation of the Vermont Education Quality Standards. [Dr. Karin Hess](#) is a recognized international leader in developing practical approaches for using cognitive rigor and learning progressions as the foundation for formative, interim, and performance assessments. She is excited to share her expertise in her home state of Vermont.

[The Curriculum Director PLC Series](#) provided curriculum leaders with the opportunity to meet regularly as a community of learners to explore content relevant to the group and to examine professional dilemmas through facilitated dialogue. Session topics are designed to be broad enough to allow participants to shape the direction of the PLC throughout the year and to bring relevant information to the table.

[Self-Paced Courses](#) provide high-quality professional learning that spans the continuum of an educator's career is essential to increase an educator's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs so that they may enable all students to learn at high levels. This series of self-paced courses on Proficiency-Based Learning focus on elemental issues related to proficiency-based instructional practices. Future courses will address other topics regarding proficiency-based instructional practices, flexible pathways, multi-tiered support systems, and local comprehensive assessment systems.

[So You Have a Plan, Now What? Using Rapid Learning Cycles to Move Initiatives Forward](#) facilitated by Dr. Elizabeth A. City, Director of the Doctor of Education Leadership Program at Harvard Graduate School emphasized Rapid Learning Cycles (3-4 week cycles of action research to test out ideas, discuss, modify and then re-implement). In addition, After Action Reviews that allow teams to re-pause and use analysis tools to maintain focus and momentum were explored through team plans that were brought to the session.

[Vermont Stories](#) provide stories from schools and districts as they implement Education Quality Standards across Vermont. Discussion Guides are provided as a companion documents for all of our Vermont Stories.

**Proficiency-Based Learning: A Systemic Approach Seminar Series:** This seminar series facilitated by staff from Great Schools Partnership focused on supporting districts and school unions in Vermont to implement proficiency-based learning. The webinar archive, and essential guiding documents and resources to support this work are available [online](#).

**Proficiency-Based Learning Edcamp Series:** The VT PBL Edcamp series provides participants with an opportunity to share and learn about proficiency-based learning in a format that is driven by the participants. An overarching theme guides the day, but participants build the sessions under that theme. Questions are asked and answered, resources shared, and networks of educators get built through these events.

**Vermont Personalized Learning Plan Platform Fair:** The fair will consist of various vendors of Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) platforms discussing and presenting their online platforms that are applicable in the management, cataloging and communication aspects of PLP's. Because of space concerns we are initially limiting registration of the event to two individuals from each of the Vermont Supervisory Unions/Districts/Unified Districts.

**Vermont Portrait of a Graduate:** The Vermont Portrait of a Graduate will clarify the skills, knowledge, and abilities students need to be successful in college, career, and life. The personalized learning plan describes how a student will meet these expectations. Educators and students throughout Vermont have helped to construct an initial draft that is being finalized by Vermont AOE staff.

**Work-Based Learning Collaborative professional learning series:** Work-Based Learning Coordinators and educators worked with AOE Arts and Social Studies content specialists around aligning Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements (PBGRs) with WBL experiences. Connections between classroom learning and WBL experiences were made to help students make the connection between academic principles and real world applications.

## **Content Specific Professional Learning Opportunities**

### **Arts Learning Target Work Session**

In this work session, visual art, music, and physical education teachers received an overview of the ways in which our state education initiatives overlap with content standards and the major shifts necessary when using them. Educators unpacked the standards to create a deeper understanding.

**Building Next Generation Science Assessment Series:** Educators met with AOE staff to clarify the need for developing curriculum-embedded performance assessments in proficiency-based systems, develop a shared understanding of essential components of curriculum-embedded performance assessments, Examine NGSS bundles to determine how they can guide the development of instructional sequences, and develop/identify and evaluate potential anchoring phenomena.

## **College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards Proficiency**

**Work Sessions:** Elementary, middle and high school teachers created sample K-12 performance indicators and Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements for the recently adopted College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.

## **Developing a Systemic PK-12 Proficiency-based Learning Health and Physical Education**

**Curriculum and Assessment Systems:** Several conference sessions have been presented for SHAPE Vermont, a professional organization that serves Vermont health and physical education teachers.

**English Language Arts and the Brain Workshop:** In this workshop offered regionally, participants learned about how using strategies from brain research can connect to best practices for teaching. While the workshop was focused on proficiencies for English language arts, many of the strategies could be applied to other areas.

**Essential Math for College and Careers (EMC<sup>2</sup>):** This innovative high school math course is being collaboratively designed by Vermont GEAR UP with high AOE staff, school teachers, and postsecondary faculty. EMC<sup>2</sup> will provide high school juniors or seniors who are below proficiency in math with an opportunity to improve their skills and alleviate the need for remediation in college.

**Science Performance Assessment Series:** This series of workshops provided educators with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the Next Generation Science Standards by constructing an aligned performance assessment. Participants were expected to pilot the assessments and then refine them based on student work.

**Unpacking New Media Arts Standards:** In this work session music teachers received a brief overview of the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS). Topics addressed included standards and proficiency-based learning, the use of learning targets, alignment of units with NCAS, and practical ways to implement these aspects in the art room.

**Unpacking Next Generation Science Standards Series:** These workshops were designed in sequential order to support the field with implementing the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) within a Proficiency System. Participants worked on understanding Act 77, EQS and Proficiency-based Learning before understanding how the way the NGSS was written could support a Proficiency-based system. Participants also began writing task-neutral proficiency scales and learned the difference between a performance expectation and a performance task.

## **Vermont Arts Learning Target Bank In-Person Work Sessions for Art or Music:**

In this work session visual art or music teachers learned a process for unpacking the National Core Arts Standards into learning targets and received an introduction to the Vermont Arts Learning Target Bank, which contains learning targets that can be used for both instruction and assessment.

**Vermont Council of Health and Physical Educators (VCHPE):** This council was formed in the 2017-18 school year and has continued to meet. This professional learning community focuses on professional development considering delivery of proficiency-based learning curricula in school systems. Educators gather three times throughout the school year to work together on developing unit and lesson plans, performance assessments, and share classroom activities that support the standards-based and proficiency-based instruction.

**Vermont Theater Educators Collaborative Conference:** The inaugural Vermont Theater Educators Conference was held at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts in Burlington, VT. This gathering was offered to those involved in theater education in Vermont schools. The goal of this conference was to celebrate theater education in Vermont, connect over shared needs, share ideas and resources, and foster a spirit of collaboration in the theater education community.

### **What does an Art class look like in a personalized, proficiency-based system that allows for flexible pathways?**

The Brattleboro Museum and Art Center in Brattleboro, Vermont will hosted a professional learning opportunity for art teachers. This workshop began with a resource sharing session. The Agency of Education's Arts specialist, Emily Titterton shared resources created in collaborative work sessions that assist in implementing the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) and transitioning to personalized and proficiency-based systems. The second portion of the day was spent engaging in a collaborative work session. Using NCAS as a guide, participants discussed and drafted materials that could include a scope & sequence and/or a bank of learning targets.

### **Agency of Education Technical Assistance Documents:**

1. [Conceptual Framework for Adults](#): Outlines the process that supports the development and use of Personalized Learning Plans from the adult perspective.
2. [Crosswalk of Personalized Learning Plans, Educational Support Team Plans, Individualized Education Program, and Section 504 Plans](#)
3. [Conceptual Framework For Students](#): Outlines the process that supports the development and use of Personalized Learning Plans from the student perspective.
4. [Critical Elements of a Personalized Learning Plan](#)
5. [Glossary of Terms](#)
6. [Key Characteristics of a Proficiency-Based Learning System of Education](#)
7. [Proficiency Based Learning 101: A Vermont Primer](#)
8. [Proficiency-Based Learning Glossary](#)
9. [Research Brief: Proficiency-Based Grading Practices](#)
10. [What is Proficiency-Based Learning?](#)
11. [Why is Proficiency-Based Learning Important?](#)
12. [Vermont AOE Case Study Learning Project](#)