



Supporting Learners & Leaders

Vermont Principals' Association
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To: Whom it May Concern
Regarding: Support for Proficiency Based Learning
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The Vermont Principals' Association fully supports proficiency based learning and the corresponding proficiency based graduation requirements as outlined in [Vermont's Education Quality Standards](#) (Series 2000). This year, 2019-2020, is an important year for proficiency based learning. Schools and school leaders around the state join together as many seniors from the class of 2020 complete their final year of high school within their given schools' proficiency based learning systems.

While there is variance in methods, timelines, systems, and reporting strategies, the fundamental gains of proficiency based learning are universal. At its core, proficiency based learning is naming a guaranteed and viable curriculum (what students will learn), and inviting students into the process of how gains will be measured (how learning will be known). This two-part core of proficiency based learning is crucial to not only understanding the work of proficiency based learning, but also as the core of quality teaching and learning.

The naming of proficiencies (standards) means building upon the longstanding knowledge regarding the importance of identifying vital skills throughout content areas. By focusing on content-related *skills* and centering transferable skills, student-learning is modernized to better match the current learning landscape. That landscape requires more adaptable skills versus singular knowledge of searchable content. In support of the need to evolve, the 2016 *Future Skills Report* conducted a comprehensive and wide-ranging research and literature review which illustrates the need for schools to develop transferable skills among students. "For their part, educational institutions at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels, must realize that their current structures are largely the products of technology infrastructure and social circumstances of the past. The landscape has changed and they now must consider how to adapt quickly in response."¹

With articulated, skill-based proficiencies in a given learning experience and the corresponding rubrics to clearly and consistently measure gains in demonstrated proficiency, students can be

¹ Fidler, Devin. 2016: Future Skills: Update and Literature Review. Prepared for ACT Foundation and The Joyce Foundation, Institute for the Future. http://www.iff.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/wfi/ACT-F_IFTF_FutureSkills-report.pdf

more involved in their learning. These steps give students the chance to measure themselves against the standard instead of only against other students or having to guess what a given teacher might have in mind.

Proficiency based learning also provides schools more ability to build diverse and equitable opportunities for students to fully realize the powerful learner-agency within the Flexible Pathways Law (Act 77). When transferable skills and corresponding content skill-based proficiencies are named as the graduation requirements, it affords students/schools the flexibility necessary to meet those requirements in personalized and dynamic ways.

The work of understanding this change, updating antiqued systems and mindsets, and communicating with stakeholders is challenging. With any significant change there is bound to be some strife and resistance. The VPA supports the school communities engaged in this work and is squarely behind the sound principles of proficiency based learning as outlined in Vermont's Educational Quality Standards as well as the administrators engaged in leading the complex and important work of implementation.

Sincerely,

The Vermont Principals' Association