NORTHEAST COMPREHENSIVE CENTER

Best Practices in Implementing Proficiency-Based Learning: An Information Brief

Prepared by the Northeast Comprehensive Center
Monique C. Morgan, Nancy Gerzon, Anne Newton

`

RHODE ISLAND PBL PROJECT

Table of Contents

Introduction

What is Proficiency-Based Learning?

Proficiency-based learning is defined as systems of academic instruction, assessment, grading, and reporting that are based on a student's demonstration of mastery of knowledge and skills. Proficiency-based learning seeks to ensure that students are acquiring the knowledge and skills deemed necessary for success in college, career, and life through state learning standards, academic expectations, and "proficiency" in course content or grade level. Students who are unable to meet expected learning standards are provided academic support through additional instruction and practice time (Great Schools Partnership, 2014).

As of 2014, 41 states have adopted policy that encompasses some variation of proficiency based-learning (Worthen & Pace, 2014). These states are in various stages of policy implementation. States that are most advanced are Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, and Oregon. Developing states include Alaska, Connecticut, Florida, Rhode Island, and Vermont (Worthen & Pace, 2014). Key elements of proficiency-based learning systems in the majority of these states include:

- learning standards that are explicit, measurable, and understood by students
- formative, interim, and summative assessments that are designed to both measure and promote learning
- a variety of assessment methods, including in-depth performance assessments that assume applications of learning
- instruction that is personalized, flexible, and adaptable to students' needs (both initially and as required by ongoing student learning)
- learning that students direct and lead, even as they learn from and with others within and outside of school
- grading that is used as a form of communication and feedback for students, parents, and teachers (Ruff & Leather, 2012)

Proficiency-Based Learning in Rhode Island

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has created a comprehensive regulatory framework that provides a strong foundation for implementing innovative strategies and proficiency-based learning systems to ensure that all students learn through personalized and flexible pathways. The intent of RIDE's proficiency-based learning initiative is to move all schools along a continuum of implementation across all of the indicators included in the New England Secondary School Consortium's *Global Best Practices.* RIDE envisions its proficiency-based learning system to ensure that all students graduate from high school well prepared for success in college, careers, and life.

RIDE has been working with RI high schools since 2004 to support the implementation of proficiency-based learning systems. This work has included multiple partnerships, school-based networks, and ongoing professional learning.

RIDE requested that the Northeast Comprehensive Center (NCC) provide this information brief that outlines current best practices in proficiency-based learning. In particular, this brief takes a close look at five sites that have been implementing these systems for several years in relation to six specific indicators of proficiency-based learning from *Global Best Practices* that RI schools have identified as challenging areas to implement.

The sites described in this brief demonstrate that while they are all strong in several of the key indicator areas, they each demonstrate a unique set of strengths and challenges. Although the areas of strength varied across the sites, one of the prevalent challenges appears to be the integration of technology. This is not surprising given the pressure to adopt technology before developing a comprehensive technology integration plan. While there is some variability in the level of implementation, these sites as a whole demonstrate a degree of innovation and progress in their selected strategies. This document provides a variety of models that can be generalized to a range of different educational contexts.

The NCC review is based on an analysis of literature and case reviews that were completed by various researchers between 2012 and 2014. In addition to analysis of case literature, NCC contacted each school or district to verify the accuracy of our analysis and to share updates on their work. Since this information brief provides details aligned to the six indicators of *Global Best Practices* and the original researchers did not necessarily focus on these indicators, we have attempted to fill in any missing information in the review during our conversations with leaders from each site. The sites reviewed for this information brief are not meant to be seen as "perfect examples" of a model; rather, they showcase the pathways, potential pitfalls, and key guiding principles that guided their efforts to transform learning for their students.

The five sites selected for this review include one school and four school districts:

- Adams 50 School District *(suburban school district located in Colorado)*
- Boston Day and Evening Academy *(urban in-district charter school located in Massachusetts)*
- Lindsay Unified School District *(rural school district located in California)*
- Regional School Unit (RSU) #2 *(rural school district located in Maine)*
- Rochester School District *(rural school district located in New Hampshire)*

RIDE asked NCC to focus on six indicators from the New England Secondary School Consortium's (2012) *Global Best Practices Self-Assessment Tool*, a practical, action-oriented resource for secondary schools to assess their relative performance in critical areas and to support their school improvement plans. The indicators in the *Global Best Practices Self-Assessment Tool* are rated on a scale from 1, meaning "initiating," to 5, meaning "performing." Schools are advised to use the scale to measure areas of weakness or need. The schools selected for the informational brief demonstrated practices that align

with the "performing" level expectations defined by the New England Secondary School Consortium for the identified indicators. The six indicators, below, were selected for review:

- Standards-Based Education
- Assessment Practices
- International and Multicultural Learning
- Technology Integration
- Transitions
- Data Systems

Although the districts and schools in the case studies may not fulfill all components of the indicators, they embody various components that together may demonstrate key attributes of a proficiency-based system.

Case reviews aligned with *Global Best Practices* indicators

Standards-Based Education

All five sites are committed to standards-based learning and have a graduation policy that requires all students to demonstrate mastery of learning standards described as "performing" in the New England Secondary School Consortium's (2010) *Global Best Practices*.

Indicator Category	Adams 50	RSU #2	BDEA	Rochester School District	Lindsay Unified School District
Standards-Based Education	x	x	X	x	x

Four central themes were identified across the sites:

- Competencies are aligned with standards and capture the most important knowledge and skills.
- Professional development is provided to help teachers align competencies to standards.
- Students must demonstrate proficiency (master competencies) before moving on to new units of study.
- Competencies are used to self-regulate pacing and instruction.

Adams 50

The Adams 50 model, known as a Competency-Based System (CBS), places students in performance levels based on their proficiency as opposed to their age or date of birth (Sturgis, 2014). Measurement topics, which are essential learning elements that are taught in conjunction with each other, were developed for all performance levels (Adams 50, n.d.). Contained in each measurement topic are learning targets, which identify the skills and knowledge in which learners need to demonstrate

proficiency. Measurement topics and learning targets were created for all subjects (Tuzzeo, 2012). The district established learning targets in over 10 content areas, which include math, English, and technology. Students, who are grouped based on what they are able to do in subjects like math and reading, work at performance levels and are promoted to the next level when they have demonstrated proficiency or mastery of all learning targets at that proficiency level. Adams 50 teachers use a common "rubric" or "scoring guide" to evaluate student progress (Adams 50, n.d.).

To provide parents and teachers with detailed information about its Competency-Based System and student learning requirements, Adams 50 designed and created the Adams 50 Wiki. An electronic web-based tool, the Adams 50 Wiki contains curriculum mapping documents and tools for subjects like math, literacy, science, social studies, physical education, and general electives as well as resources that teachers can use to support all student learning levels (Adams 50, n.d.). Adams 50 also strives to keep parents and other stakeholders in the community informed about their system through workshops and informational evening sessions throughout the school year.

In addition, Adams 50 has created a website, www.cbsadams50.org, that provides an overview of CBS along with archival information and an "In the News" section which documents the extensive media coverage the district's implementation of CBS has generated.

RSU #2

RSU #2's proficiency-based system's standards for learning are comprised of measurement topics and learning targets, which were created by a group of the district's teachers (RSU #2, 2013). The development of its system and curriculum by teachers was guided by several collaborative partners. RSU #2 worked with the Re-Inventing Schools Coalition (RISC), which provided a professional development sequence on how to implement a proficiency-based system. The training, conducted one year before implementation, focused on instructional strategies, assessment, and leadership.

...focused and strategic instruction across the RSU on specific areas of knowledge and skills and to assess such learning in a manner that guarantees every learner will master the desired knowledge or skills.

RSU #2 began their work in proficiency-based learning by (1) identifying standards and how they align to the Common Core, (2) articulating proficiency requirements to the Maine Department of Education, (3) establishing reporting processes, (4) focusing on effective teaching strategies, and (5) eliminating limitations (Hammonds, 2013). Through their partnership with the Maine Cohort for Customized Learning, RSU #2 developed a learner-centered curriculum that was based on Maine Learning Results, the Common Core Standards, and measurement topics (RSU #2, 2013). The curriculum framework was created to ensure that there is "focused and strategic instruction across the RSU on specific areas of knowledge and skills and to assess such learning in a manner that guarantees every learner will master

the desired knowledge or skills" (RSU #2, 2013). The measurement topics, which are established for grades K–12, were designed for math, language arts, science, and social studies. Teacher-designed formal and informal assessments and a common rubric are used to measure students' performance and keep track of their progress (RSU #2, 2013). Learner-centered strategies[1] were developed to guide RSU #2 in establishing a common language for instruction.

BDEA

BDEA's competency-based system is aligned to standards-based competencies, or learning targets, and benchmarks that all students need to master (Priest et al., 2012). Benchmarks in math, science, and humanities are used to organize learning and monitor progress. Individual personalized learning plans describe the benchmarks and the requirements to fulfill them (Competency-Based Pathways, n.d.). Graduation at BDEA occurs four times a year, allowing students to enter BDEA in September, January, or April and pace themselves towards completion of their courses. Students' paths to graduation are varied based on where they are assessed during their first trimester at BDEA. Instructional delivery options, which include classes in the day/evening and online/blended courses, are then incorporated into their individual personalized learning plan (BDEA, n.d.). BDEA offers a variety of supports for students to ensure that they are on track with their learning, e.g., weekly check-ins and reports on student progress, review committees, advisors, student support teams, and reading and math specialists (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014; Sturgis, 2012).

Rochester School District

In the Rochester School District instruction and planning drive the district's standards-based system. Teachers have developed competencies in each of the content areas at the middle school level, for each course at the high school level, and competencies for reading, mathematics, art, music, and physical education at the elementary level (Rochester School District, n.d.). Performance indicators (describing what the students need to know and be able to demonstrate), rubrics, and instructional and classroom strategies provide teachers with a framework for their instruction and inform them on how they can work to ensure students master course competencies (Rochester School District, 2013). The district identifies good performance indicators as those that combine both knowledge and skill; describe how learning develops; are clear; and can be assessed, tested, or measured in a variety of ways. To keep parents, students, and teachers informed about curriculum, instruction, and assessment, teachers and staff developed and maintain a Google site with universal templates, rubrics, and resources for all course competencies in each grade (Rochester School District, n.d.).

[1] Refer to "D: Commitment to use and develop effective, learner-centered teaching strategies" on page 7.

Lindsay Unified School District

Lindsay Unified School District's system is organized into measurement topics and requires students to work at their performance level and advance through the curriculum when they have demonstrated proficiency of required knowledge or skills (Lindsay Unified School District, n.d.). The measurement topics include subjects like math, language arts, science, and elective courses for grades K–12 (Lindsay Unified School District, n.d.). Teachers are supported with instructional practices through various resources, which include a guide to ensuring effective teaching and a cycle of instruction flow map.

Assessment Practices

All five sites have changed their approaches to designing, delivering, and using assessments as outlined in the New England Secondary School Consortium's (2010) *Global Best Practices* as "performing."

Indicator Category	Adams 50	RSU #2	BDEA	Rochester School District	Lindsay Unified School District
Assessment Practices	X	X	X	X	X

Six central themes were identified across the five sites:

- Ongoing assessments are aligned to competencies.
- Performance indicators or learning targets are established for each competency.
- Multiple measures are used to assess proficiency/competence.
- Common scoring guides are used to establish consistent analysis of assessment results.
- Levels of proficiency/competence are established to track student learning and progress.
- Professional development and/or guidance are critical in developing assessments, giving feedback, or reviewing student work to maintain rigor and reliability.
- Support is provided to students who do not demonstrate proficiency, such as relearning and reassessment, allowing additional time to complete a course, and continuing in a course where their learning left off.

Adams 50

At Adams 50, teachers use a "rubric" or scoring guide to monitor student progress on a four-point scale. Students earn scores of 1 to 4, with 1 meaning "emerging" and 4 meaning "advanced," based on how well they know the material. The four-point scale requires students to earn a score of 3 or above on each learning target associated with a measurement topic in order to demonstrate mastery (Adams 50, n.d.; O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014). Students demonstrate mastery through various evidence-based formative measures, which include assignments, informal assessments, and portfolios (Adams 50, n.d.). Students who demonstrate mastery can advance to the next performance

level at any point of the school year. Assessments are held at any time during the school year, and students can take an assessment more than once in a year (O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014). Adams 50 identified several practices teachers can employ to track learner progress through formative and summative assessments. These include pretesting to identify learner needs and assigning scores based on the district-wide rubric (Adams 50, 2012). Currently, the district is working to develop the next generation of scoring guides, which will be known as proficiency scales so teachers across the district will have clear guidance on learning progressions and the depth of knowledge within and across performance levels to ensure consistent expectations for all students. Adams 50 believes this will help to provide more effective assessments (O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014).

RSU #2

RSU #2's assessment practices are designed to show that students have a clear understanding of the measurement topic as well as the learning targets. The district's assessment practices include six processes[2] that allow for:

- providing explicit learning targets that are public and accessible
- using formative assessment data to check and adjust instruction
- offering consistent communication between teacher and student about assessment
- giving learners choice in how they demonstrate learning
- using assessment results to measure against a performance level
- using quality assessments and accurately recording evidence of achievement

The district also developed guidelines and practices for monitoring learning and delivering feedback to students, while knowledge is being acquired. These include examples of forms of feedback (verbal or written guidance, one-on-one tutoring, peer review, scoring, and so on) (RSU #2, n.d.).

BDEA

Students at BDEA are assessed at the end of each trimester through oral and written exams, portfolio presentations, and experiential projects (BDEA, n.d.). BDEA defines formative assessment as the practices students engage in to assess how well they know course content. Formative assessment serves as a guide in how teachers can offer additional supports for students so they are prepared to pass the summative assessment (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). Homework, classroom assignments, projects, and other forms of assessment are used for formative purposes. BDEA defines summative assessment as a practice that measures benchmark and overall competency of students. The questions in summative assessments encourage a higher level of thinking for students (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). If students are unable to demonstrate their mastery of course content, they can have additional time to complete a course, take a course again, or continue

[2] Refer to "B: Commitment to Assessment Practices that Support Learning" on page 4.

where they left off in a course.

Teachers at BDEA are continuously collaborating and working in teams to improve assessment practices. Two key tools teachers use to design rigorous assessments are the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix and the Quality Performance Assessment Guide (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). During collaborative department time, teachers improve how they measure competencies by reviewing teacher created assessments and rubrics and ensuring that they include higher order thinking skills. Once assessments are approved, departments also review examples of student work in order to calibrate and come to an agreement about what constitutes mastery. Through these exchanges teachers not only challenge one another on maintaining rigor and reliability in assessments, but work to ensure more consistent assessment practices across the school (Wolfe, 2012).

Formative assessment serves as a guide in how teachers can offer additional supports for students so they are prepared to pass the summative assessment.

Rochester School District

For some teachers at Rochester School District, assessment practices begin with pre-assessment, which is then followed by formative and summative assessments (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014). Pre-assessment strategies – pre-tests, student discussions and demonstrations, standardized test data, and writing prompts/samples – determine what students know about a subject before it is taught. Teachers also use pre-assessment data to determine grouping practices (Stofanak, 2012). The district suggests the use of pre-assessment; however, it is not a formalized assessment. Teachers design the assessment on their own and choose to implement it (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014).

Rochester emphasizes that the effectiveness of formative and summative assessments, which are aligned with course competencies and performance indicators, resides in what the assessments are being used for, not the design (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014). Students demonstrate their mastery and understanding of information, skills, and concepts through various forms of formative assessment, such as conferences with teachers, interviews, journal entries, oral presentations, quizzes, and problem solving activities. At the high school, seven strategies[3] were developed to guide teachers in administering formative assessments (Stofanak, 2012). Teachers use summative assessments to report on students' academic progress and habits of engagement as well as to inform their instructional practice (Rochester School District, 2013; Rochester School District, n.d.). Final grades reflect the level of mastery students have attained, not an average of their scores on tests and assignments.

[3] Refer to slides 34 through 39.

Teachers use common rubrics, which communicate the requirements and descriptors of various levels of mastery to students (Rochester School District, n.d.). The rubrics employ a scale of A (Advanced Competent), B (Beyond Competent), C (Competent), and NYC (Not Yet Competent) (Rochester School District, 2014). Students who have demonstrated skill and content mastery may not have to do additional formative tasks, but they may be required to participate in more complex activities (Stofanak, 2012). The district has established the rules and requirements for promotion[4] in each grade level, and provides supports for students who struggle to demonstrate mastery of content and skill through a framework for "relearning and reassessment" (Rochester School District, n.d.). Teachers evaluate what students must relearn, and the "relearning" is tailored based on a student's needs (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014). When students have demonstrated relearning, they are offered reassessment and their reassessment grade replaces the previous one. In addition, intervention teacher supports, online learning opportunities like My Learning ROCKS!, or an individualized plan through alternative pathways can be provided (Rochester School District, n.d.; M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014).

Lindsay Unified School District

Assessment practices at Lindsay Unified School District begin with an understanding of learning targets and what mastery looks like (Lindsay Unified School District, n.d.). The district provides several practices[5] that support learning and assessment, such as making learning targets explicit, public, and accessible so students know what they are expected to do (Lindsay Unified School District, n.d.). Students are allowed and encouraged to demonstrate their learning in various ways. At the end of each measurement topic the district's academic scoring scale is employed to determine student-level proficiency on that topic. Learning logs, research papers, debates, and portfolios are used to gather evidence of student learning. The district allows students additional time to complete courses, the opportunity to repeat courses, or the chance to pick up where they left off if they were unable to demonstrate their mastery of course content (Priest et al., 2012; Lindsay High School, n.d.). Students also have the option of working independently on missed learning targets.

Students are allowed and encouraged to demonstrate their learning in various ways.

In Lindsay Unified, the purpose of grading is to give students feedback on their progress and achievement, not to punish them. All students receive academic and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

[4] Refer to "Promotion of Students" on page 27.

[5] Refer to "Assessment Practices that Support Learning" and "Assessment Practices that Inhibit Learning" on pages 5-6.

grades (Lindsay High School, n.d.). Students' SEL grades, which are integrated into all content areas and required of every Lindsay Unified student to fulfill, are identified as "Life-Long Learning Standards." They are based on the qualities a graduate must possess to be successful, and are scored using evidence similar to that used for academic areas.

The purpose of grading is to give students feedback on their progress and achievement, not to punish them.

International and Multicultural Learning

One site has demonstrated that it enhanced student understanding of international issues and world cultures. School leaders at BDEA have made an effort to incorporate international knowledge, cultural diversity, and global values into academic programs and student learning opportunities, as described in the New England Secondary School Consortium's (2010) *Global Best Practices* as "performing."

Indicator Category	Adams 50	RSU #2	BDEA	Rochester School District	Lindsay Unified School District
International Multicultural Learning			x		

BDEA

BDEA's work towards international and multicultural learning is accomplished through breaking stereotypes and engaging in community-building activities. Student Leadership Team members work with their advisor to examine bias and stereotypes (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). Students then meet and share their perceptions with student leaders from Hudson High School, a school with dramatically different demographics (94.8 percent white, with 17.9 percent of its students eligible for free or reduced price lunch), to learn about each other's circumstances and realize they are not so different (BDEA, n.d.; Niche, 2013). Through these activities students learn how to question stereotypes and support communities for living and learning (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

BDEA fosters international and multicultural learning through acknowledgment and recognition of its diverse student population (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). The school embraces all cultures of students through cultural events where students have an opportunity to share who they are. The school also provides students and faculty with the opportunity to participate in neighborhood scavenger hunts, which expose the school to various culturally rich neighborhoods (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). The teachers' role in recognizing the diverse student population has been to connect themes in the curriculum to students' cultures. Humanities courses, for example, have competencies that allow students to identify a theme or culture to explore (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

Technology Integration

Four sites have demonstrated their use of technology to support personalized proficiency-based learning as outlined in the New England Secondary School Consortium's (2010) *Global Best Practices* as "performing."

Indicator Category	Adams 50	RSU #2	BDEA	Rochester School District	Lindsay Unified School District
Technology Integration	x		x	x	x

Four central themes were identified across the sites:

- Technology supplements and supports instruction, such as blended learning, online courses, academic games, and supplemental software.
- Technology offers ways to assess students' learning.
- Technology is used to provide individualized student learning options.
- Professional development is offered to teachers in the effective use of technology.

Adams 50

The district's efforts to integrate technology included the development of four online mathematics games and teacher-developed flipped classroom video lessons in its secondary schools and a K–12 math curriculum (Steele et al., 2014). The goals of the mathematics games are to provide students with the opportunity to practice specific math skills and to identify skills in which students need additional support (Steele et al., 2014). Teachers have also utilized Google Classroom for their flipped classroom models. The Google domain has served as a venue for engaging students in collaborative projects. Chromebook stations have been deployed in all elementary and middle school classrooms, and mobile carts have been installed in the high schools. The infrastructure for a BYOD network was put in place two years ago to encourage students to utilize personal devices while at school.

In 2013, Adams 50 implemented the use of Progressive Math Initiative (PMI), a K–12 math curriculum, which includes hand held smart responders that allow students to provide real time responses that indicate whether they understand the course material being taught (Adams 50, 2013; O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014). PMI informs teachers, on the spot, if they need to spend additional time on a concept or move forward. Through using PMI, students who are advanced in their learning can move forward with online content and teachers can offer additional supports for students who are behind (Adams 50, 2013). Students were also found to be more engaged in math by sharing what they know and asking questions when they did not understand (Adams 50, 2013).

Teachers also use several online instructional resources: IXL, a free competency-based resource that provides leveled mathematics problem sets; Progressive Math Initiative's online instruction resources

and assessments; Raz-Kids' downloadable instructional slides; and Khan Academy's instructional videos (Steele et al., 2014). Teachers incorporate these resources by creating worksheets that include practice questions, vocabulary notes, and Quick Response codes linked to videos or other online resources for different math learning targets (Steele et al., 2014).

BDEA

BDEA received a two-year grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to enhance its competency-based approach through the integration of technology (Bertand et al., 2013). In the first year, BDEA teachers learned how similar schools were integrating technology and how the use of technology could be used to support BDEA's students. During that same year, a small group of teachers participated in a year-long design course in educational technology at Northeastern University. Teachers learned the mechanics of transferring their 11-week course "modules" to the Moodle platform, and then piloted some of those classes in an online format. In the second year, teachers piloted various scenarios of online learning and shared strategies and approaches for building and implementing courses with other teachers (Bertand et al., 2013). The courses, called personalized online learning courses (POLL), include math, science, history, and "undergrad tech" and provide students with self-paced and blended learning options. Students were required to do "physical labs" and projects as assigned by their instructor, who they have access to when they have questions or need help (Bertand et al., 2013; A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

In developing POLL courses, teachers have fine-tuned several components to meet the needs of students. With some students finding it difficult to manage their time, teachers created pacing guides to give them an understanding of where they should be in a POLL course (Bertand et al., 2013). To support students struggling with course competencies, teachers created online learning labs which allowed these groups of students to spend additional time on the course material and advance to the next semester. Teachers also created "Online Learning: How to Be Successful," a course module that informed students about how to complete assignments and communicate with their teachers (Bertand et al., 2013). With BDEA's decision to use a free platform, the school was able to develop more online courses and integrate the courses into the school curriculum. Although POLL courses have made learning convenient and accessible to students, teachers have identified some issues in using the courses. Teachers are continuing to explore more effective ways to integrate technology into instructional practice emphasizing the social aspect of learning and building practices that encourage collaboration and communication (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). BDEA teachers are continuing to explore what blended learning will look like in their classrooms in ways that emphasize active learning methodologies. Some departments are currently utilizing Khan Academy for students to review new and old course content. Interactive programming games, in subjects like math, are used to increase student skills and competency. Teachers also use RedInk and other editing software that allows students to identify mistakes in their writing and coach them on how to revise their writing (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

Rochester School District

Rochester School District is working towards integrating technology into its system. It has offered various online and e-learning opportunities for students. PLATO, which is an online course created for credit recovery in subjects like reading, writing, and math, has been provided to students at Spaulding High School (Brown, 2012; National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, n.d.). The district also utilized Moodle to host their online content for My Learning ROCKS!. Through Moodle, My Learning ROCKS! is able to provide students in grades 1 through 8 as well as ELL students with additional opportunities to gain competency and skills in course content (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014).

Lindsay Unified School District

Lindsay Unified School District leverages technology not only to extend knowledge and understanding, but also to personalize and differentiate learning for every child and adult in their learning community. Learners are provided access to instructional software that is aligned to the district's vision for learning and technology. Each learner in grades 4-12 has been provided a laptop or Chromebook to provide access to learning 24/7 and the district has established a 2:1 ratio with tablets in grades K–3. To supplement the tablets at the primary levels, every K–8 site also has a computer lab and laptop carts. In addition, LUSD utilizes a digital learning platform (DLP) to organize and deliver learning resources and assessments to facilitate a personalized and blended learning environment for learners. The DLP will also provide professional development resources online for learning facilitators (formerly teachers), district leadership, and the school board through an adult learning curriculum that aligns with the district's strategic design.

Transitions

School leaders and teachers in two sites have demonstrated strong connections between sending and receiving schools that focus on programmatic alignment and student needs as outlined in the New England Secondary School Consortium's (2010) *Global Best Practices* as "performing."

Indicator Category	Adams 50	RSU #2	BDEA	Rochester School District	Lindsay Unified School District
Transitions			x	x	

Across these two sites, two key ideas emerged:

- Professional development helps teachers understand how learning develops in core courses across grade levels.
- Efforts are undertaken to introduce students to proficiency-based education before they enter school, for example, through an in-depth orientation and pre-assessment process.

Adams 50

At the district level, Adams 50 created the Office of Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness to support students in their transition from high school to postsecondary institutions or careers (O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014). This office focuses on developing career pathways for all students in the district. Students are exposed to the most promising emerging and existing jobs and informed about the skills and knowledge that employers are requiring of their new employees (O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014). Each student creates an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) to document postsecondary and workforce readiness goals, needs, and interests with their assigned counselor or advisor (Adams 50, n.d).

BDEA

Boston Day and Evening Academy provides transition support for students whether they are new to the school, enrolling in a new course, or transitioning to post-secondary education and work (Sturgis, 2012; A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). To ensure effective transitions, BDEA offers new students an in-depth orientation and a full trimester seminar. Through these sessions and an assessment of their skill level at enrollment, students learn about the school's competency-based system, the supports available to them, and the requirements for graduation (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). To create flexibility at the end of each semester, teachers review benchmarks and identify how they can help students who are struggling (Sturgis, 2012). Students are allotted transfer windows, where they have two weeks to complete work if they want to progress to the next course. Results on their assessments are also used to guide students with appropriate skill level to take advanced classes with local community colleges. BDEA continues to support students during the first nine months after graduation to help them balance college, work, and family responsibilities (Sturgis, 2012).

Rochester School District

Rochester School District has addressed students' transition from middle school to high school in various ways. The Google site has been one resource teachers have used to know what is being taught across all grade levels. Knowledge of course content in various grade levels allows teachers to better support incoming students and students in the grade levels they teach (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014). Students are also provided with a plan to support their transition from middle school to high school. For students who are struggling with a content area but are transitioning from middle school to high school, high schools in the district are provided with information on what the student must continue working on and the supports available for the student in the midst of their transition. These supports include summer opportunities like Summer ROCKS! (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014).

Data Systems and Applications

Four sites have developed data systems to align key program elements and track completion of competencies as described in the New England Secondary School Consortium's *Global Best Practices* (2010) as "performing."

Indicator	Indicator Category	Adams 50	RSU #2	BDEA	Rochester School District	Lindsay Unified School District
2.7	Data Systems and Applications	x		x	x	x

Four central themes were identified across the sites:

- Electronic grading and reporting options track students' progress, for example, learning management systems.
- Students, teachers, and parents have access to information in the learning management system.
- Professional development is offered to students, teachers, and parents regarding how to access, use, and interpret data in the learning management system.
- Districts and schools need to do significant work to align current data management systems with proficiency-based learning.

Adams 50

Educate has been used in the elementary, middle, and high schools to track student progress. When complications arose around tracking student credits that impacted the accuracy of high school transcripts, Adams 50 attempted to use the standards-based recording features in Infinite Campus for high school students. However, it found that the Infinite Campus platform didn't align with its proficiency-based learning model, so it will be moving back to Educate. Despite this issue, Adams 50 continues to provide teachers and parents with resources to make their use of Educate easier. Parents are offered a tutorial and evening information sessions to understand the system and how they can track their child's progress (O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014).

BDEA

The most important thing about technology integration is finding a software system that aligns with what teachers are teaching, assists in developing student skill and competency, and minimizes set up time and troubleshooting. Currently, BDEA is using an educational version of Salesforce, which is an on-demand customer relationship management software program commonly used by businesses to assist in global customer communication (Salesforce, n.d.). The tool has been customized by BDEA to track student progress on benchmarks and competencies across courses (A. Hramiec, personal

The most important thing about technology integration is finding a software system that aligns with what teachers are teaching, assists in developing student skill and competency, and minimizes set up time and troubleshooting.

communication, October 27, 2014). Salesforce also tracks attendance, student intervention, and academic progress. BDEA has referred to Salesforce as a more comprehensive data management tool compared to its former software program, EASE. Salesforce consultants worked with BDEA to customize the system and train two staff members in using the tool. The two staff members provide technical support to all staff and adjust the system to meet teachers' and students' needs (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

Rochester School Department

To track student competencies, Rochester School District is using the student management system Infinite Campus. Currently the district is looking to adopting a learning management system that can complement Infinite Campus and host assessments for students (M. Moriarty, personal communication, October 21, 2014).

Lindsay Unified School District

Lindsay Unified School District uses Educate[6] as its Digital Learning Platform, because of its alignment with the district's strategic design. Learners' assessments are delivered and completed in the DLP, and learning facilitators (formerly teachers) score and save evidence of learning directly into the system. Through data stored in the DLP, learning facilitators can identify what learners are engaged in, what they know, and what their instructional needs are. Staff, learners, and parents also have online access to data in the DLP to monitor learning progress on an on-going basis (24-7).

Implementation strategies

Implementing a proficiency-based system that enhances student learning and prepares students for college, success, and life requires significant time, preparation, and organization. It is advised that schools not focus on trying to implement and design each component perfectly, but rather to begin the process from where they are, learn, and improve along the way (Sturgis, 2014). The examination of the sites that demonstrated best practices in the six indicators from *Global Best Practices* provides guidance on what can be done to successfully implement proficiency-based learning practices. Moreover these sites are still developing their systems and have noted that implementation is a process that involves continuous improvement. The following four key implementation strategies were culled from the information available on the five sites.

[6] LUSD's Digital Learning Platform will be Empower in early 2015.

System Support: Prior to implementation of proficiency-based learning, these sites sought support from faculty and the community, including parents/guardians. Without their support, the transition from a traditional to a proficiency-based education system proves to be difficult. Additionally sites, like Adams 50, emphasized that the implementation of their system required collaboration and engagement in a learning process from all stakeholders, for example, administrators, teachers, students, and parents. RSU #2 administrators conducted a three-day professional development session to inform faculty about the implementation of the new system and to answer any questions/concerns they might have. The session's goals were to provide knowledge on a proficiency-based system and gain faculty and community support in adopting the model throughout the district (Maine Department of Education, 2014). Using a different strategy, Lindsay Unified School District gained support for its system by including parents, staff members, board members, students, and community members in the development of a guiding document to support their standards-based system. The collaboration resulted in a strategic design which included the district's mission, core values, principles, vision, and life-long learning standards. Sites continued their focus on community inclusion by providing resources, updates on the system, and access to information on student progress.

Professional Development: Extensive professional development was required for successful implementation, with more time required than originally anticipated. Professional development was used to engage the community and stakeholders, gain understanding about system change, develop competencies, align assessments, develop new assessment approaches, analyze student learning data, and revise instructional practices. Additionally, professional development offered an opportunity for all faculty to work on building community, cohesiveness, and consistency. Refer to RSU #2, BDEA, and Rochester School District (in the appendix) for details on how professional development was executed and how it impacted their system.

Curriculum Development: Curriculum development involved unpacking standards and creating competencies and clear learning goals for each unit of study. At BDEA, for example, curriculum development began with a focus on the students: where they were and where they needed to be. Next BDEA administrators and selected staff identified the strengths and weaknesses that existed in each content area, and reflected on the alignment of course content and proposed competencies with Common Core and state standards. This reflection, discussion, and collaboration of BDEA's teachers contributed to the development of a curriculum that was not only aligned to standards but also supported students in their learning and mastery of content. This was consistent across all sites -- developing a strong understanding of content, proficiencies, and what mastery "looks like" involved ongoing dialogue among teachers within and across grade levels.

Ongoing Review and Revision: Implementing a proficiency-based system requires continuous review, revision, and improvement. All sites conduct continuous reviews throughout their school year to identify flaws in their systems and improve them. Adams 50 adopted a continuous improvement cycle that includes explicitly defined evaluation criteria and progress monitoring cycles, and acknowledges improved outcomes. BDEA uses a "Data Inquiry Cycle" and all staff engages in two retreats annually to

look at school data and discuss ways to improve practice. RSU #2 and Rochester School District reflect and adjust the system throughout the year to evaluate district progress. When an issue in the system is identified, it is adjusted immediately. Lindsay Unified incorporates a district-wide Cycle of Inquiry framework to review progress towards SMART goals and to adjust related action plans.

Appendix - District profiles

Adams 50

Adams 50

Location: Westminister, Colorado

Type of Neighborhood: Suburban

Type of District: Public

# of Students: 10,101

Graduation Rate: 74%

% of Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 81%

% of White Students: 18%

% of Black Students: 1%

% of Latino Students: 73%

% of Asian Students: 5%

% of Other: 3%

% of ELL: 45%

% of Special Ed Students: N/A

After two years on academic watch from the Colorado Department of Education, Adams 50 adopted a Competency-Based System to improve student achievement (Hanover Research, 2012). The district worked closely with the Re-Inventing Schools Coalition (RISC), adopted the organization's model and made revisions to align the model with its needs. To gain support for the system, Adams 50 sought buy-in from various stakeholders, including teachers, parents and the Board of Education. The district shared their vision for the competency-based system with local media and state lawmakers (O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014). The district also emphasized that throughout the implementation process leaders would not have all the answers, but would utilize resources and collaborate with individuals to resolve implementation challenges. After gaining the support of stakeholders, including an overwhelming vote of support from teachers, the district began the first phase of implementing its competency-based system in the fall of 2009 (O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014). Competency-based learning was gradually phased in at the high school level so as not to have a negative impact on students who were already close to graduation.

Adams 50's competency-based system encompasses four major components (Adams 50, n.d.):

- leadership, which addresses moral purpose, relationships, vision, change adeptness, with a sustained focus on results
- shared vision, which provides systems for input and communication, strategic planning, and performance
- competency-based design, which includes well-defined standards, aligned assessments, an instructional model that is student-focused, and systems for reporting/recording student learning based on standards
- continuous improvement cycle, with explicitly defined evaluation criteria, embedded progress-monitoring cycles, and celebration of improved results

With learning defined as constant and time as a variable, Adams 50 designed a guaranteed and viable curriculum in 10 content areas which are divided in performance levels (Adams 50, n.d.). The performance levels were narrowed in scope with the hope that students could move through the levels

quickly and experience a sense of accomplishment (Tuzzeo, 2012). Measurement topics, which contain learning targets that specify the skills to be addressed and how to measure those skills, were developed for all performance levels. Measurement topics and learning targets were created for all subjects, which include math, technology, and physical education (Tuzzeo, 2012). Targeted instruction, student engagement, and mastery became the focus of the district's adopted system.

One of the biggest early challenges the district faced was finding funding for extended professional development and curriculum writing for teachers (Tuzzeo, 2012). By closing and consolidating schools and reprioritizing budgets, Adams 50 was able to move forward with implementation of CBS. Leadership also recognized that some teachers were not comfortable with a new education system and encouraged them to pursue teaching careers in more "traditional" environments.

By taking these steps the district was able to adjust funding to provide for more professional development for CBS and significantly increase the starting salary for new teachers (Tuzzeo, 2012). Administrators and teachers expressed their own challenges – a need for a better data management system, support in planning instruction based on assessment results, and help with differentiating for students at various levels in the same class.

During the first year of implementation, as expected, student scores in reading and math dropped. However, in 2014, the percentage of the district's third graders identified as "unsatisfactory readers" dropped from 20 to 16 percent (Meyer, 2014). Over the past four years the district's school performance has improved significantly. The district is no longer classified as "turnaround", and fewer than 25 percent of its schools are identified as "priority improvement" (Garcia, 2014; O. Grenham, personal communication, November 7, 2014).

Regional School Unit #2 (RSU #2)

After four school districts and five towns were consolidated into one district and students' assessment scores declined, RSU #2 began to work toward a vision of student-centered learning (Maine Department of Education, n.d). The district created a strategic plan, with input of community members, to guide its implementation of a student-centered, standards-based system (RSU #2, 2011). The vision, which was approved by the Maine Department of Education in 2011, included eight indicators that would serve as the foundation for the implementation of a proficiency-based education system.

RSU #2 administrators held a district-wide, three-day professional development session to explain what a proficiency-based system is and to gain support from faculty to adopt the model throughout the district (Maine Department of Education, 2014). At the conclusion of the three days faculty members voted to support the new approach.

RSU #2 cites that progress has been made possible through the district's use of "checking and adjusting" the system. Throughout the first year, the district evaluated its progress. When a flaw was identified, it was addressed immediately. For example, it was noticed that the "student-paced" curriculum was not being implemented as expected. Students at Hall-Dale Middle School were falling behind and not completing their work until the end of the trimester or year because deadlines were not enforced. To ensure students' completion of coursework on time, RSU #2 changed the "student-paced" rule to "teacher-paced or faster" (Maine Department of Education, 2014). With the "teacher-paced or faster" rule, students could work at the pace of teachers and move ahead as they saw fit. "Checking and adjusting" has been embedded in RSU #2's culture and offers a process for monitoring and improving the district's proficiency-based system.

Regional School Unit #2 (RSU #2)

Location: Hallowell, Maine

Type of Neighborhood: Rural

Type of District: Public

# of Students: 2,172

Graduation Rate: 89%

% of Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 41%

% of White Students: 91%

% of Black Students: 2%

% of Latino Students: 3%

% of Asian Students: 2%

% of Other: 3%

% of ELL: 1%

% of Special Ed Students: N/A

Along with other districts in Maine that have adopted this model, RSU #2 has addressed several challenges: a common and clear definition of proficiency-based education, local implementation of legislative policy, support and understanding from parents, time for professional development, various grade and developmental approaches, learning management systems, resources for predicted costs, and preparing students for college and career. Through the challenges RSU #2 has identified five key lessons that have contributed to the success of its proficiency-based learning system:

- engaging faculty in the discussion of a proficiency-based system and the changing structure and programs
- consistent and in-depth professional development focused on how to make the change and why
- managing the relationship between leadership and the grassroots
- developing community involvement through invitations to join ad hoc committees or meetings
- seeking help from outside organizations and consultants (Maine Department of Education, n.d.)

Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA)

To ensure student progress toward graduation, postsecondary success, and a curriculum which fosters depth of knowledge and critical thinking, Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA) developed a competency-based approach to teaching and assessment in 1995 (Wolfe, 2012; A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). BDEA serves a population of students who have dropped out of high school or are off track for graduation. BDEA's competency-based approach requires students to meet 300 benchmarks in humanities, math, science, and technology. Students are required to demonstrate mastery in order to graduate (A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). After enrollment and prior to starting classes, students are assessed in order to identify where they are academically and

what they have left to master in order to graduate (Wolfe, 2012; A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). The assessment informs BDEA students, from day one, about what they need to do to become competent in a particular content area or course. In implementing their model, BDEA administrators and staff created a step-by-step process to ensure that competencies were aligned with state and Common Core standards (Wolfe, 2012; A. Hramiec, personal communication, October 27, 2014). This eight-step process has resulted in BDEA modifying the scope and sequence of courses and creating new curricula and assessments for additional competencies. BDEA's competency alignment process entailed (Wolfe, 2012):

Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA)

Location: Roxbury, Massachusetts

Type of Neighborhood: Urban

Type of District: N/A

# of Students: 359

Graduation Rate: 49%

% of Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 100%

% of White Students: 9%

% of Black Students: 51%

% of Latino Students: 35%

% of Asian Students: 1%

% of Other: 4%

% of ELL: 3%

% of Special Ed Students: 14%

- **Building familiarity with the Common Core and state standards' content and philosophy**: BDEA administrators participated in a training at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to understand why the state adopted the Common Core, how it aligned with the state's exam (MCAS), and how the new adoption would affect BDEA students. BDEA leaders gained valuable tools for helping teachers understand the Common Core and how it can be aligned with BDEA's goals and philosophy.
- **Developing alignment through departmental and interdepartmental retreats:** During a two-day retreat with department heads, the director of instruction, two to three teachers from each department, and coaches from WriteBoston and the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) aligned BDEA's competencies to the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework. As a result of discussions of BDEA's mission and student population, school goals, students' challenges and needs, and strengths and weaknesses of the existing instructional platform, BDEA added competencies for fifth- through eighth-grade level English and math to meet the expectations of the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework.
- **Defining, refining, and removing competencies:** After identifying gaps between what they were teaching and the Massachusetts Frameworks and the Common Core, BDEA examined standards applicable to each department, prioritized them, and refined and/or removed them. Many students enter BDEA with third- through sixth-grade math skills, which hinders their ability to fulfill the math standards in the Common Core. To address the issue, BDEA met with math teachers from outside the school, and attended math conferences focused on identifying essential skills for supporting students who are far below grade level in math. BDEA's math teachers refined their competencies by combining content and the Standards of Mathematical Practice (SMP) in the Common Core. Through this they determined that all BDEA students must demonstrate the ability to solve open-ended problems and apply what they learn to the real world. BDEA also included standards from the Common Core elementary school level in their competencies because teachers often taught students elementary math concepts. To offer courses for students whose pre-assessment scores indicated readiness for higher level

mathematics, BDEA faculty created partnerships with Bunker Hill Community College and the Benjamin Franklin Institute.

- **Identifying benchmarks for competencies:** BDEA held department meetings throughout the school year to examine benchmarks, add or remove them as necessary, and rearrange benchmarks with the appropriate competencies. To not overwhelm teachers and ensure a thoughtful process, BDEA created a multi-year phase-in of the aligned competencies, which encompass the next three steps in its process.
- **Crafting a scope and sequence for competency benchmarks:** Once competencies and benchmarks were defined, BDEA created a scope and sequence. The process of crafting a scope and sequence and rolling out competencies and benchmarks was repeated throughout the school year, providing teachers with an opportunity to reshape their curriculum and assessments to match the adjustments they made to competencies and benchmarks.
- **Rolling out new competencies and benchmarks:** To increase engagement and ensure staff members were comfortable with and had knowledge of the competencies and benchmarks, instructional leaders and department heads devoted professional development time to discussing the changes and their implications for teaching and learning.
- **Creating curriculum and assessments:** These discussions led to the staff reexamining the school's current curriculum and assessments. For example, the Humanities department adjusted its scope and sequence by incorporating a greater focus on critical thinking skills and devoting more time to reading. All reading levels of the texts were reviewed to ensure that they were appropriate and at a higher level than before. The changes were rolled out in small meetings that allowed teachers to engage with the competencies and scope and sequence as well as discuss what these changes would mean for classroom instruction and students. Meetings also provided the space for teachers to present how they defined a measurement, share examples of student work, and ask colleagues to assess if their student mastered the benchmark. Through this collaboration teachers were able to develop consistent assessment procedures.
- **Performing ongoing review and revision:** To ensure that their competency-based system is meeting students' needs and is aligned with the Common Core and state standards, BDEA faculty engage in feedback throughout this cycle, thus providing ongoing revisions to the process. BDEA's process and competency-based approach has benefited its students. From 2009–2011, an average of 90 percent of students passed the 10th grade MCAS in English, even though 55 percent of students entered the school with less than an eighth-grade reading level. In the same time frame, 80 percent of students passed the 10th grade MCAS even though 63 percent of students entered with less than eighth-grade math skills.

Rochester School District

With the state's policy to embed competencies into New Hampshire's high schools, the Assistant Superintendent of Rochester School District sought to create a philosophy and structure that would be vital to the success of all students (Stofanak, 2012). In 2013, the district adopted a K–12 competency-based system. The implementation process began with the administrative team visiting high schools

across the country that were engaged in a competency-based system (Stofanak, 2012). Through their observations, the team realized that there was no specific model that would assist them in successfully implementing their own competency-based system. With support from consultants, who had expertise in subjects like math and literacy, the district built a foundation for its competency-based system that involved significant changes to curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices, as well as the refinement of leadership and professional learning systems. Additionally, the district developed course competencies and performance indicators. The district recognized from the beginning that if real change was to occur they would have to work closely with teachers and help them build the system and "own the change" (Stofanak, 2012).

The first phase of implementation began at Spaulding High School where teachers were engaged in the implementation through professional development. Faculty members were introduced to the system by analyzing their current assessment practices using Webb's Depth of Knowledge framework. Through this experience, teachers realized that most of their assessments were at low levels of rigor and they needed to rework unit plans and learning tasks to reach higher levels of strategic thinking (Stofanak, 2012). A common grading philosophy statement was developed so that every teacher had a common language in instruction, assessment, and grade reporting (Stofanak, 2013). With the framework in place, Spaulding High School established that a student's grade would represent their mastery of each course competency, and they would also have to demonstrate professionalism competency, those habits that students must master and exude (Stofanak, 2012).

Professional development was the core of Spaulding High School's implementation. The administration's selection of eight instructional leaders as Competency-Based Assessment coaches helped to engage faculty in a different way. Twice a month, faculty would attend presentations where the CBA coaches discussed their models of practice for each content area and shared how they applied their model to assist students in the mastery of content. This created a safe environment in which faculty could express their concerns and fears, while gaining new levels of understanding (Stofanak, 2012). Teachers worked together to develop competency statements, performance indicators, and common scoring rubrics. Collaboration also extended into assessment development and a focus on incorporating all depths of knowledge (Stofanak, 2012).

After its first year of implementing a competency-based system, Spaulding High School reflected on some of its challenges. One of the challenges was how to manage re-learning and reassessment during the constraints of a traditional school setting, for example, bells, scheduling, teacher contracts, and access to technology (Stofanak, 2012). Initially the school addressed the challenge by scheduling re-learning and reassessment days on their school calendar. Students who demonstrated that they were "Not Yet Competent" would come in to work on competencies that they needed to master, while students who had demonstrated

Rochester School District

Location: Rochester, New Hampshire

Type of Neighborhood: Rural

Type of District: Public

# of Students: 4,359

Graduation Rate: 87%

% of Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 46%

% of White Students: 91%

% of Black Students: 2%

% of Latino Students: 3%

% of Asian Students: 2%

% of Other: 3%

% of ELL: 1%

% of Special Ed Students: N/A

mastery would engage in enrichment activities or serve as peer tutors. Recognizing the importance of effectively communicating expectations to their students and parents, the school established clear protocols for teachers to follow to increase student engagement in the re-learning and reassessment process (Stofanak, 2012). During the second year, the school implemented "support blocks" to provide freshmen who are "Not Yet Competent" in course competencies and in danger of not earning a course credit with additional support while in their course. The goal is to increase student course success resulting in fewer freshmen failing courses. The structure of the support blocks would include three teachers (course, support, and duty) who would collaborate with one another to ensure that a student's referral for re-learning and reassessment would be pursued and the student's needs would be met.

As Rochester School District continues to implement its competency-based system, it provides various resources for parents, educators, and students. The effort to include the community in the system fosters support and understanding for the system.

Lindsay Unified School District

Lindsay Unified School District's adoption of a performance-based system was based on its desire to increase rigor, have accountability for everyone in the learning community, and improve the curriculum for and assessment of student learning (Lindsay Unified School District, n.d.). In addition, the district had a high number of learners with gaps in their learning, unmotivated learners, and seniors not prepared for college and career (American Youth Policy Forum, 2013). Prior to implementing its performance-based system, Lindsay Unified School District created a District Strategic Design in a process that involved parents, faculty members, board members, students, and community members. The strategic design is a document that defines the district's mission, core values, guiding principles, vision, and life-long learning standards (Lindsay High School, n.d.). Its intent was to transform the district into a standards-based system where all students would attain high levels of academic and personal excellence with the opportunity to pursue the career of their choice (Lindsay High School, n.d.).

The district developed academic units of study and measurement topics in all K–12 content areas. Measurement topics, based on California state standards, define the knowledge and skills required for all Lindsay Unified students (Competency-Based Pathways, 2011). These topics are supported by a "comprehensive assessment system with multiple measures" that guarantees what learners will know and be able to do before graduating from Lindsay High School. To ensure that students' needs are fulfilled and they can demonstrate what they know and are able to do, teachers group and regroup students on a daily or weekly basis and sometimes longer. The district provides flexibility by allowing learners to go into another classroom, with students of other competency levels, or with another

Lindsay Unified School District

Location: Lindsay, California

Type of Neighborhood: Rural

Type of District: Public

# of Students: 4,176

Graduation Rate: 83%

% of Free/Reduced Price Lunch: 89%

% of White Students: 6%

% of Black Students: 1%

% of Latino Students: 92%

% of Asian Students: 2%

% of Other: 1%

% of ELL: 50%

% of Special Ed Students: <1%

learning facilitator to experience other opportunities of learning based on their need, interest, and mastery of content (American Youth Policy Forum, 2013).

Additional components of Lindsay Unified's system include a community driven, future-focused strategic design; a comprehensive assessment system; a 0–4 scoring scale; an electronic assessment, scoring, and tracking system; and close monitoring of learning (American Youth Policy Forum, 2013).

The implementation of the performance-based system began with the 9th grade class in the fall of 2009. The incoming freshmen were required to demonstrate specific competencies in each unit of study before they advanced to the next. One of the major implementation challenges of the first year was students' struggle to demonstrate mastery of the end of the school because they took advantage of the opportunity to pace their learning. After the first year, over one-fourth of the 9th graders did not complete the required competencies, and they were required to begin their sophomore year where they left off in the 9th grade (Competency-Based Pathways, 2011).

After its first year of implementation, Lindsay High School was recognized for the highest growth of all the schools in its district based on a 45-point Academic Performance Index (API) gain. In 2010–2011, the school made substantial gains with an increase in its API. The performance-based system was expanded to the entire district in 2012 (Lindsay Unified School District, n.d.).

Bibliography

Adams 50. (2012). Learner-Centered, Competency-Based Instructional Model. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/Mkhtaj

Adams 50. (2013). "PMI" Is Changing the Way Math Is Taught. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/SGGI6l

Adams 50. (n.d.). Adams 50 Wiki. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/uEXtlf

Adams 50. (n.d.). Adams County School District 50: Standards-Based Scoring. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/S9HIri

Adams 50. (n.d.). Literacy: 2013-2014 Learning Targets. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/mPWeP9

Adams 50. (n.d.). SBS: Math Level 08 v4. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/JIPj43

Adams 50. (n.d.). Technology: Performance Levels. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/H0AJRv

Adams 50. (n.d.). Westminster High School, Ranum Middle, Language Policy. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/DIwm62

Adams 50. (n.d.). Our Competency Based System (CBS). Retrieved from http://goo.gl/gTkbj7

Adams County School District 50. (2013). Accreditation Plan Designations. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/64IyHk

American Youth Policy Forum. (2013). Promising Practices and Considerations for Districts in Competency-Based Education [Webinar]. Thomas Mooney: Lindsay Unified School District. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/UyMroy

Bertand, C., Allen, L., and Steinberg, A. (2013). Using Educational Technology to Help Students Get Back on Track. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/nNDjW9

Boston Day and Evening Academy. (2012). BDEA Math Competencies. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/WrRsLj

Boston Day and Evening Academy. (2012). Individualized Learning Plan: Humanities. Retrieved

from http://goo.gl/TKaSff

Boston Day and Evening Academy. (2012). Individualized Learning Plan: Science. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/A95tfS

Boston Day and Evening Academy. (n.d.). Breaking Stereotypes/Building Community. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/YHbjjD

Boston Day and Evening Academy. (n.d.). Fast Facts. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/igRDDE

Brown, K. (2012). PLATO Program. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/biHyoD

California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit. (2013). Enrollment by Ethnicity for 2013-2014. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/H22SVt

California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit. (2013). Number of Classified Staff 2013-2014. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/kj3QIY

California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit. (2013). Cohort Outcome Data for the Class of 2012-2013. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/dIb2pF

Competency-Based Pathways. (n.d.). Boston Day and Evening Academy. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/kSrw7K

Garcia, N. (2014). State board, struggling districts to talk turnaround efforts next week as clock runs short. *Chalkbeat Colorado*. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/3LKQIz

Great Schools Partnership. (2014). Proficiency Based Learning. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/e0ADgg

Hammonds, V. (2013). Instructional Leadership from DC to the Classroom: A reflection by Regional School Unit 2 practitioners. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/6qh8mO

Hanover Research. (2012). Best Practices in Personalized Learning Environments (Grades 4-9). Retrieved from http://goo.gl/WgK3TU

Lindsay Unified School District. (2007). Lindsay Unified School District Strategic Plan.

Lindsay High School. (n.d.) Performance-Based System: Parent and Student Information Handbook. Lindsay Unified School District. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/DBkOa8

Lindsay Unified School District. (n.d). Assessing, Scoring, and Reporting Guidelines for the LUSD Community. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/pkpkUM

Lindsay Unified School District. (n.d.). Lindsay Unified School District Performance-Based System. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/5g7VzF

Maine Department of Education. (2011). Ethnicity by District. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/faH0rK

Maine Department of Education. (2014). The Long Conversation or "Its hard, but worth it. Did I mention that its hard?": RSU 2 Student-Centered Learning Implementation Case Study. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/XtLZl9

Maine Department of Education. (2014). Overview and Summary. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/cSxZ5F

Meyer, J. P. (2014). Meyer: Is Westminister 50 on to something?. *The Denver Post.* Retrieved from http://goo.gl/5RqhZr

My Learning ROCKS!. (n.d.). Welcome to My Learning ROCKS! Retrieved from http://goo.gl/NWprRG

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. (n.d.). Model Program: PLATO Learning, Inc. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/IRYlRs

New England Secondary School Consortium. (2010). Global Best Practices: An Internationally Benchmarked Self-Assessment Tool for Secondary Learning. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/5ExRyI

Niche. (2013). Hudson High School. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/NLkk8i

Priest, N., Rudenstine, A., & Weisstein, E. (2012). Making Mastery Work: A Close-Up View of Competency Education. Quincy, MA: Nellie Mae Education Foundation. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/Y7pquf

Rhode Island Department of Education. (2013). Rhode Map: Proficiency-Based Learning. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/U41vKF

Rochester School District. (2013). Competency-Based Learning, Instruction, and Assessment Guide for Educators. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/LNcpyr

Rochester School District. (2014). Competency-Based Assessment and Grading Philosophy Statement. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/GBtN7z

Rochester School Department. (n.d.). Student Professionalism Rubric. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/QK3UZ6

Rochester School Department. (n.d.). CBA Models of Practice: Grade 4 Math Unit 7. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/ejC8Df

Rochester School Department. (n.d.). Elementary Competencies. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/sPLQqT

Rochester School Department. (n.d.). High School Competencies. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/oX2EBU

Rochester School Department. (n.d.). Rochester Middle School Competency. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/zEjKjr

RSU #2. (2011). RSU #2 Strategic Plan PDCA for Implementation of a Student-Centered, Standards-Based School System. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/oPUxxO

RSU #2. (2013). RSU's Standards-Based, Learner-Centered Framework. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/VqQdDJ

Ruff, D. J., & Leather, P. (2012). Proficiency-Based Learning Task Force. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/szAW1q

Spaulding High School. (n.d.). Competency Grading Philosophy. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/sn68dg

Steele, J. L., Lewis, M. W., Santibanez, L., Faxon-Mills, S., Rudnick, M., Stecher, B. M., & Hamilton, L. S. (2014). Competency-Based Education in Three Pilot Program: Explaining Implementation and Outcomes. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/LLYj43

Stofanak, E. (2012). Competency Based Instruction and Assessment: Building the Framework. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/8tp0vb

Stofanak, E. (2012). Model of Practice French I: Tout pour la Rentree. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/U1txQv

Sturgis, C. (2012). Boston Day and Evening Academy: A Learning Organization. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/KZetk9

Sturgis, C. (2014). A Conversation with Adams 50. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/0WdEMY

Tuzzeo, J. (2012). Making Standards Serve the Student. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/0IuXd8

University of Maine. (2013). Proficiency-Based Learning. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/7lRnp5

Webb, N. (2005). Web Alignment Tool. *Wisconsin Center of Educational Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison*. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/vBOePj

Wolfe, R. (2012). Aligning Competencies to Rigorous Standards for Off-Track Youth: A Case Study of Boston Day and Evening Academy. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/74FloL

Worthen, M., & Pace, L. (2014). A K–12 Federal Policy Framework for Competency Education: Building Capacity for Systems Change. Retrieved from http://goo.gl/BIFcPI