Leading Change at Hazen Union School: The Power of Iteration
Vermont Stories Discussion Guide

Overview
This video features Principal Mike Moriarty and Associate Principal John Craig of Hazen Union School in Hardwick, Vermont. These leaders discuss the philosophy that informs their work and the school-wide practices they have encouraged to support proficiency-based learning, including professional development and communication strategies.

Key Concepts
Act 77: A policy passed by Vermont in 2013 to encourage flexible pathways to secondary school completion. It is intended (1) to encourage and support the creativity of school districts as they develop and expand high-quality educational experiences that are an integral part of secondary education in the evolving 21st Century classroom; (2) to promote opportunities for Vermont students to achieve postsecondary readiness through high-quality educational experiences that acknowledge individual goals, learning styles, and abilities; and (3) to increase the rates of secondary school completion and postsecondary continuation in Vermont.

Continuous Improvement: An ongoing effort to strengthen an educational system through an extended process of revision and iteration.

Flexible Pathways: In Vermont, schools must provide students the opportunity to experience learning through flexible and multiple pathways, including but not limited to career and technical education, virtual learning, work-based learning, service learning, dual enrollment, and early college. Learning must occur under the supervision of an appropriately licensed educator. Learning expectations must be aligned with state expectations and standards.

Proficiency-Based Learning: A model of education in which there are clear expectations for student learning, and all decisions, reporting, and grading are guided by those expectations. In a proficiency-based system, the goal is for students to demonstrate evidence of mastery in all essential proficiencies. This is in contrast to traditional systems, which advance students based on seat time.

Discussion Questions
- The school leaders in this video have embraced a practice they call "sandbox learning" in which they encourage their teachers to experiment and make mistakes–

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like a child playing in a sandbox. How might this practice support iteration and innovation?

- What are the barriers to educators "getting messy" and experimenting with new practices in your school context? What might help overcome those barriers?
- Hazen Union School has used a variety of mediums to communicate with the community about proficiency-based learning, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, mailings, their website, and their school board. Thinking of your own school community, what do you think are the best ways to reach stakeholders to communicate about the shift to proficiency-based learning? What stories could you share with them?
- In the video, principal Mike Moriarty talks about his vision for what Hazen Union School might look like in 10 years. What do you want your school system to look like in 10 years? How does proficiency-based learning play into that vision?

More Information

- LEARN more about Hazen Union School.
- EXPLORE the Vermont AOE's "Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework: Resources and Support for Continuous Improvement Planning".
- READ CompetencyWorks' "Continuous Improvement and Innovation" blog post.