

Presentation Audio Transcript

Question #1: How do standards fit in a proficiency-based assessment system?

Slide 1: Before we begin to address the process of proficiency development, we need to understand how standards fit in a proficiency-based assessment system. What do we mean when we say “proficiency,” and how does that relate to “standards?”

Slide 2: According to the Vermont Agency of Education, a proficiency is: An “explicit and measurable” description of “transferable skills and standards adopted by the state of Vermont and include explicit, measurable, learning targets aimed at empowering students.” The main differences between standards-based education and proficiency-based education has everything to do with how we manage and describe the skills and knowledge students need to demonstrate in order to be successful in college, in career, and as a citizen. It is not that we are abandoning standards, but we are organizing them in such a way that is manageable and meaningful with scaffolded and supported learning along the way. At its simplest, standards exist within proficiencies. We develop proficiencies in order to organize standards into logical, doable sets.

Slide 3: To help us understand this a little more deeply, let’s look at an example. One of the proficiencies Vermont has defined in its sample documents is Clear and Effective Communication. If we look at just three sets of standards being used in Vermont, we see that each set approaches communication, albeit with different language. But, effective communication is effective communication regardless of the subject. Proficiency-based systems hover above, they look at the broad set of skills. Rather than assess students in different content areas using different language, proficiency-based systems look for the commonalities across all content areas. Cross-disciplinary language is developed into proficiency statements. Vermont uses the term transferable skills to describe these cross-disciplinary proficiencies. As you explore resources, you will find others across the country use words like habits, dispositions, 21st Century skills, soft skills, and Work-Study Practices to describe the same concept.

Slide 4: Proficiencies are also developed in content areas. These are often organized around cross-cutting concepts or themes. The science proficiencies from Vermont for example, include cross-cutting concepts like Structure, Function and Information Processing, Matter and Energy in Ecosystems and Organisms, and Growth, Development, and Reproduction of Organisms.



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As students progress through their studies in science, they will develop skills and knowledge in these cross-cutting concepts to develop proficiency.

Slide 5: Just like transferable skills are connected to national standards, so are content proficiencies. Vermont AOE has developed sample proficiencies in [Global Citizenship](#), [Health Education](#), [English Language, Arts& Literacy](#), [Mathematics](#), [Physical Education](#), [Science](#) and [Arts](#). They are intended to be used in conjunction with transferable skills to determine if a student has met Performance-Based Graduation Requirements. In systems where standards drive proficiency development, when students have met their PBGRs, they have met the standards.

Slide 6: So, why wouldn't schools just do standards-based education, why do we add this layer of proficiency in personalized learning? The answer is twofold.

Slide 7: First, proficiency-based assessment systems focus on the connections between skills and content areas. They identify the commonalities between all, making meaningful connections.

Slide 8: Second, the sheer number of standards is unwieldy. Just take a look at the C3 Framework for Social Studies. In sixth grade, there are over fifty indicators spread across four dimensions and nine sub-topics. That is only one subject. When we add in CCSS Math and English, Next Gen Science Standards, ISTE standards, and the other standards we expect students to meet, the number just grows and grows. How can teachers manage all these standards, let alone students in a personalized system where they are making more decisions about what they learn, how they learn, and how they demonstrate skills and knowledge. Developing a proficiency-based system organizes standards to make them manageable.

Slide 9: Standards are important. They help us measure student success and provide us with research-based, developmentally appropriate goals. We need standards; proficiency-based education allows us to reorganize them so they are meaning and manageable as schools develop personalized systems for student success.

Slide 10: The tasks to help you explore this question more are below. If possible, it is best to do this thinking with peers. While you can complete the tasks that are most relevant to you and your role, we suggest that you start with the Text-Based Reflection before moving on to

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the other tasks and activities. Remember to record your work in the Evidence of Learning Tool and to check out More Resources below. If you have any questions or want to share additional resources you think might help others, please contact the Center for Collaborative Education at vtclg@ccebos.org.