

Digging Deep Expert Series: Fostering Professional Learning in Vermont

Vermont Stories Discussion Guide

Overview

This video features reflections and learning from the 2016-17 Digging Deep Expert Series with Dr. Karin Hess. During the four days of the series, participants from across the state of Vermont examined key components of proficiency-based assessment systems, created proficiency scales to guide instruction and assessment, and examined how to collect and review bodies of evidence.

Key Concepts

Digging Deep Expert Series: A VT PLN professional learning opportunity featuring national proficiency-based learning experts. During the 2016-17 series, Dr. Karin Hess led four days of learning on research-based frameworks, practices, and tools for personalized, proficiency-based learning.

Dr. Karin Hess: A national leader in developing practical approaches for using cognitive rigor and learning progressions as the foundation for formative, interim, and performance assessments. Dr. Hess has supported school districts across the country in creating and analyzing high-quality performance assessments and performance scales for proficiency- and competency-based learning systems.

Vermont Professional Learning Network (VT PLN): A statewide system to address the need for a coordinated, cohesive, and consistent approach to professional learning across the state with an emphasis on geographic equity and comparable quality articulated in one specific scope of work. One of the main purposes of VT PLN is to create a common understanding about the Education Quality Standards and personalized, proficiency-based learning systems through the sharing of resources, ideas, and expertise.

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

- One of the participants said, “Different people have had bits and pieces of PD, but to have everyone in the same room hearing the same thing, and then to think about the



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entry point for them has been really powerful.” What are the pros and cons of bringing a team to a professional learning event versus sending an individual?

- In the video, Dr. Hess narrates some of the entry points schools have selected as they transition to proficiency-based education. Where did your local education system choose to begin the transition to proficiency-based learning, and why?
- What strengths does your school bring to proficiency-based learning?
- What challenges does your school face in proficiency-based learning? How might professional learning opportunities or collaborations with other school systems across the state help you overcome those challenges?

More Information

- LEARN more about the [Vermont Professional Learning Network](#) and [Digging Deep Expert Series](#).
- EXPLORE Dr. Karin Hess’s [research and tools](#).

