



**Advancing Competency-Based Pathways to  
College and Career Readiness**

Communications Toolkit

## **Competency-Based Pathways: Excerpts from Media Coverage**

### **Excerpts from Media Coverage**

#### **Shaking Up the Classroom**

Wall Street Journal

March 10, 2014

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304899704579391101344310812>

The 4,100-pupil district at the base of the Sierra Nevada range is part of an experiment shaking up classrooms across the country. Called competency-based learning, it is based on the idea that students learn at their own pace and should earn credits and advance after they master the material—not just because they have spent a year in a certain class.

Salvador Centeno said he used to get bored at school and would secretly read Harry Potter novels during math. The 12-year-old, who would be in seventh grade in a traditional school, pulled out his school-issued laptop and opened a spreadsheet showing he is doing ninth-grade math. “Now, I can't slack off,” he said with a smile.

Competency-based learning goes further, jettisoning the century-old idea that students move ahead based on age and classroom time. In the past few years, Iowa, Connecticut, Maine and Utah changed laws to let districts define what a credit means, bringing the number to 29 states.

#### **Transition To New Grading System Continues In Nashua**

New Hampshire Union Leader

April 18, 2014

<http://www.unionleader.com/article/20140418/NEWS04/140418999>

The new system, which is part of a broad wave of education reform throughout public education, will establish a list of clearly-defined skills and levels of knowledge students are expected to have at the end of a course. Students will receive numerical scores that reflect their abilities with different elements of each course and along the way, they will have opportunities to make up work to ensure they earn credits.

... With competency-based grading, students understand at the start of a course what expectations they need to meet. An example used at an earlier workshop listed four competencies students need to demonstrate in a World Studies course. Students need to display an understanding of tensions based on power and wealth and people's reactions, and show they understand the roots of foreign policy.



Students must also be able to connect ideology, behavior and demographic changes and role of government, and demonstrate interactions with physical and technological environments.

For each of those four elements, or competencies, students will receive a score of 1 to 4, with 1 signifying a student is “in progress” and 4 reflecting the fact that a student is “proficient with distinction.” In order to earn credit for a course, students must score at least a 2, or “partially proficient” in all competencies listed for the course.

Students who are struggling with any particular required competency will have the chance to make up work with a teacher during the new E-Block, a 35-minute period built into each school day that allows time for remedial work. Students who are on target with all competencies in all courses will be able to use the E-Block for enrichment projects and activities.