

Proficiency-Based Learning Subcommittee

Vision

Our subcommittee envisions a Nevada in which every learner embodies the Portrait of a Nevada Learner. This means all Nevadans will have unlocked the skills necessary to attain and sustain meaningful and rewarding careers, contribute to their communities, and collectively create a brighter, more prosperous state. Nevada will have a world-class education system and a thriving economy. Our people and our communities will flourish.

Making this vision a reality requires that we build a system where competency-based education (CBE) is the norm for every learner. In such a system, students are empowered to take ownership of their learning journeys. They progress at their own pace, based on demonstrated mastery of knowledge and skills, rather than seat time. Learning is personalized to the student, meaning that all students receive support and enrichment tailored to their individual strengths, needs, and interests. Some may rapidly advance through certain skills, competencies, and domains, while spending more time on others to build stronger understanding and ability to apply knowledge. As KnowledgeWorks, a key partner engaged with districts piloting this approach, defines the work: “a personalized, competency based education approach centers each student’s strengths, needs and interests and provides differentiated supports and ways to demonstrate what they know and know how to do, ensuring each student graduates ready for what’s next” (KnowledgeWorks, 2024).

A CBE system is essential for cultivating the future-ready skills, competencies, and dispositions, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration, that are highlighted in the Portrait. Crucially, these are the same skills that the Commission’s research has shown are essential for success in modern work environments and communities (NCEE, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2023).

We want to stress that CBE is not about lowering standards for excellence and equity for all learners. Rather, it is about taking those high standards and using them to measure students’ ability to use and apply knowledge in meaningful and diverse contexts. A world-class CBE system prioritizes all learners by ensuring that all students, regardless of background and geographic location, have access to rigorous and personalized learning opportunities. In this system, assessment becomes a supportive and empowering process that enables students to receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs. There is an explicit commitment to ensuring that all students can demonstrate competency.

Our vision is rooted in our in-depth study of how the world’s leading education systems – from high-performing countries like Singapore, Canada, and Estonia to leading and rapidly innovating states such as Massachusetts, Colorado, and Utah – are building personalized, competency-

based systems. They maintain a relentless focus on ensuring all students meet clear performance standards, exemplified by authentic and applied work. They offer personalized learning pathways anchored to meaningful skills standards. They also put strong emphasis on early intervention and support to ensure students are prepared for learning and thrive throughout their education.

Current Nevada Context

The Nevada Future of Learning Network is launching competency-based learning implementation pilots in multiple districts. The purpose of these pilots is to build district capacity to activate the aspirations of the Portrait of a Nevada Learner, build a collaborative and mutually supportive cohort to share knowledge and insights, and deepen the degree to which school and district systems, policies, and practices support personalized, competency-based learning. Participants are engaging in cycles of collaborative learning, practicing, reflecting and sharing. This initial pilot launched in July 2024 and will continue through June 2026.

The Future of Learning Network's work takes place in three phases:

- Phase 1: Capacity Building – The focus of this phase was on building the framework for a statewide network to collectively advance personalized, competency-based learning. Stakeholders from diverse sectors across the state were brought together to develop a vision, communications strategy, and the necessary support infrastructure to sustain the statewide effort.
- Phase 2: Foundational Structures – This phase is focused on launching the statewide network and developing key components, including the Portrait of a Nevada Learner that defines expectations for student mastery.
- Phase 3: Integration – This upcoming phase focuses on integrating the Portrait of a Nevada Learner and associated competencies into broader statewide systems, such as school-performance planning, family support services, and educator development programs.

Next steps for the Future of Learning Network include:

1. Expand Communications and Engagement: A key priority moving forward will be enhancing communications strategies. This includes developing a comprehensive public communications plan, storytelling tools, and early success stories to promote awareness and support.
2. Align Statewide Systems and Structures: Nevada will need to work to integrate personalized, competency-based learning strategies into existing systems, including redefining seat time and attendance policies. Programs that provide social-emotional and academic support will need to be reviewed to ensure alignment with the new competencies.
3. Focus on Educator Development: Building the professional capacity of teachers is critical to the success of the Portrait of a Learner. This includes improving professional learning

opportunities and creating resources to support educators in implementing personalized, competency-based learning systems.

4. **Update Data Dashboards and School Performance Frameworks:** The Network will help to improve the state's data infrastructure. Additionally, school climate surveys that better reflect the values of each learning community will be integrated into performance frameworks.

The Future of Learning Network builds on previous networks to define and promote competency-based education. In 2017, the Nevada Legislature passed Assembly Bill 110, which established the Nevada Competency-Based Education Network and Pilot Program (CBE Network). Assembly Bill 110 specifically defines CBE as “a system of instruction by which a pupil advances to a higher level of learning when the pupil demonstrates mastery of a concept or skill, regardless of the time, place, or pace at which the pupil progresses.”

Guiding Principles for Policy Recommendations

As we discuss, align, and refine our policy recommendations, we want to consistently stress-test whether they meet the following guiding principles:

1. **Ensure the Voices of Students and Educators are Meaningfully Including in the Policymaking Process:**

Students and educators should be engaged as meaningful partners in building, scaling, and sustaining competency-based education. Their input, guidance, and feedback will be essential to ensuring that learning experiences give students meaning, joy, and the skills that are essential to their long-term success.

2. **Incentivize Ongoing Learning and Continuous Improvement, Rather than Mandates**

Our policy recommendations should not take the form of “one-size-fits-all” mandates that stifle innovation and prevent educators and schools from meeting the needs of diverse learners.

3. **Remove Inconsistent or Restrictive Policies:**

Our recommendations should identify and challenge existing policies that inhibit innovation and continuous learning and growth.

4. **Focus on Sustainability and Scalability:**

Design pilots and policies with flexibility in mind, allowing it to adapt to future trends and evolving student needs. This includes building the capacity for ongoing updates to competencies as they are stress-tested against future community and labor market needs, as well as ensuring scalability across all districts and schools in Nevada.

Policy Recommendations

1. Compare current seat time requirements in Chapter NRS 392 to guidelines from the Aurora Institute to determine what policy changes need to be made so that “learning is the constant and time the variable” is true across Nevada.

- a. What shifts in NRS would be necessary to fully align with the Aurora Institute guidelines?
 - b. Other than NRS, what other policies may be barriers here?
2. Align NRS's definition of competency-based education with the current definition of personalized, competency-based learning in use by the Future of Learning Network and the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education.
3. The Portrait of a World-Class Teacher Subcommittee is recommending additional time for teachers' high-quality professional learning. Ensure that the professional learning provided during this time includes learning experiences that are intentionally designed to build teachers' capacity to engage students in personalized, competency-based learning.
 - a. Such learning could be offered as part of the Future of Learning Network, in collaborative teacher teams, under the guidance of teacher mentors who have experience in the personalized, competency-based approach, or some combination of the above.
4. The Portrait of a World-Class Teacher Subcommittee is also recommending additional time for principals' high-quality professional learning. Ensure that the professional learning provided during this time includes learning experiences that are intentionally designed to build principals' capacity to design schools as learning organizations that support personalized, competency-based learning for all.
5. Develop a scope and sequence for implementation of the competencies in the Portrait of a Nevada Learner that are most relevant to Pre-K (3 and 4), elementary, middle, and high schools. Provide funding and structures for this scope and sequence to be developed by educators who have been active participants in the Future of Learning Network, and ensure that it is piloted, refined, and improved in partnership with Nevada districts.
6. Ensure that the funding and infrastructure exists to sustain the Future of Learning Network through the phases of its pilot, scaling, and capacity-building.

Outstanding Questions and Implementation Considerations

1. What current policy enables our vision? What existing policy is standing in the way of our vision? What is our phase-in process for removing restrictive or outdated policies, creating enabling conditions for pilots, and then scaling pilots to systems-level impact?
2. How can we empower schools to innovate while maintaining alignment with the Portrait of a Nevada Learner? How can state regulation set clear boundaries around what is expected is a competency-based approach, while also ensuring the system is flexible and adaptive enough to reach all districts, schools, and students?
3. What additional funding is necessary for our recommendations, and what sources or flexibilities exist?