

# Personalized, Competency-Based Learning in Nevada

## A Vision and Implementation Companion

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### Introduction

Nevada has spent the better part of the last decade building the conditions for more learner-centered, future-ready systems of teaching and learning. Across the state, educators, school leaders, community partners, and policymakers have engaged in efforts designed to strengthen learner agency, modernize instructional practices, support deeper learning, and create more equitable pathways for success.

This work has taken shape through multiple statewide initiatives and partnerships, including the Nevada Future of Learning Network, Portrait of a Nevada Learner implementation efforts, Nevada Department of Education competency-based education pilots, innovation partnerships, and the work of the Commission for Innovation and Excellence in Education (CIEE). Together, these efforts reflect a growing statewide commitment to ensuring that every young person experiences learning that is meaningful, rigorous, personalized, and connected to life beyond school.

This document is intended to serve as both a shared statewide vision and an implementation companion for personalized, competency-based learning (PCBL) in Nevada. It is designed to support educators, school and district leaders, policymakers, and community stakeholders as they work toward more coherent, learner-centered systems. While this resource identifies shared principles and implementation considerations, it is not intended to prescribe a single statewide model for implementation.

**The purpose of this resource is not to prescribe a single model or implementation pathway. Rather, it is intended to clarify what Nevada means by personalized, competency-based learning, describe what those learning experiences look like when fully realized, and provide guidance for systems considering how to move more intentionally toward this vision over time.**

## Part I: Nevada’s Shared Vision for Personalized, Competency-Based Learning

Nevada’s vision for personalized, competency-based learning is grounded in the belief that all learners deserve access to learning experiences that are rigorous, relevant, responsive, and designed to help them develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for success in a rapidly changing world.

Personalized, competency-based learning is not a program or initiative. It is a systems-level approach to teaching and learning that requires alignment across instructional practice, assessment, leadership, policy, and learner supports. It shifts the focus *from* compliance, pacing, and coverage *toward* mastery, learner agency, meaningful application, and continuous growth.

This vision aligns with Nevada’s broader efforts to support future-ready learning systems, strengthen Portrait of a Nevada Learner and subsequent district designed learner profile implementation, and prepare learners to navigate an increasingly complex and AI-augmented world.

### Nevada’s Shared Definition of Personalized, Competency-Based Learning

The Commission for Innovation and Excellence in Education affirms the following definition of personalized, competency-based learning for Nevada, building from language included in Senate Bill 403 and the state’s broader future-ready learning efforts:

Personalized, competency-based learning means a system of learning in which:

1. A learner advances through courses based on evidence of mastery or competence;
2. A learner makes important decisions about his or her learning experience on a daily basis, including, without limitation, how the learner will create and apply knowledge and demonstrate mastery or competence in a concept or skill;
3. A learner receives differentiated support based on his or her individual learning progress, such that learning may be accelerated or remediation may be provided;
4. A learner learns actively using different pathways and varied pacing; and
5. Expectations for learning are rigorous, transparent, measurable, and transferable.

This definition reflects Nevada’s commitment to creating learning systems that center learner growth, meaningful demonstration of learning, flexibility, and equitable access to high-quality instruction and support. The design principles that follow are intended to help

clarify how this definition may be understood and applied across classrooms, schools, districts, and statewide systems.

## Nevada PCBL Design Principles

The following design principles help clarify what personalized, competency-based learning means in practice across classrooms, schools, and systems in Nevada.

Nevada PCBL Design Principle	In Practice	System Implications
Learning progression is based on demonstrated mastery.	Learners progress based on evidence of learning and competency rather than solely on time spent in a course or classroom. Learners receive multiple opportunities and pathways to demonstrate understanding and apply knowledge in meaningful and rigorous contexts.	Assessment systems, grading practices, schedules, and credit policies support flexible pacing, demonstrations of learning, and continuous feedback.
Learners exercise agency and ownership.	Learners actively participate in decisions about their learning, reflect on progress, set goals, and engage in meaningful application of knowledge and skills.	Educators and leaders create structures that support learner voice, reflection, goal-setting, and meaningful choice within rigorous learning environments.
Learning experiences are personalized and responsive.	Instruction, supports, pacing, and pathways are responsive to learner strengths, interests, needs, and progress.	Systems provide differentiated supports, flexible pathways, and collaborative structures that allow educators to respond to learner variability.
Learning is rigorous, transparent, and transferable.	Learners understand clear expectations for learning and apply knowledge and skills in authentic, complex, and transferable ways.	Curriculum, instruction, and assessment systems are aligned around transparent competencies and meaningful demonstrations of learning.
Systems are designed to support continuous growth.	Learners experience coherent systems that promote continuous improvement, reflection, and growth over time.	Educators, leaders, and policymakers align structures, professional learning, resources, and continuous improvement processes to support learner-centered experiences statewide.

## **What Learners Experience in a Fully Realized PCBL System**

Because personalized, competency-based learning is a systems-level approach to learning design, implementation responsibilities extend beyond classrooms alone. In a fully realized personalized, competency-based learning system, learners experience school as meaningful, challenging, and connected to their identities, goals, interests, and aspirations. Learners understand what they are expected to learn and why it matters. They receive timely feedback, engage in reflection, and demonstrate learning through multiple forms of evidence over time.

Learners are active participants in their own learning experiences. They make meaningful decisions about how they learn, how they demonstrate understanding, and how they apply knowledge and skills in authentic contexts. Learners are supported in developing agency, self-awareness, collaboration skills, and the ability to transfer learning across settings and disciplines.

Learning experiences are designed to be rigorous and responsive. Learners receive differentiated support and flexible pathways while being held to high expectations that are clear, measurable, and that promote readiness for all pathways.

## **What Educators Do in a Fully Realized PCBL System**

Educators function as designers of learning experiences rather than solely deliverers of content. They create opportunities for learners to engage in deeper learning, inquiry, application, and reflection. Educators use evidence of learning to personalize support, adapt instruction, and help learners make progress toward mastery.

Educators collaborate regularly with colleagues to design high-quality learning experiences, calibrate expectations for mastery, analyze evidence of learning, and strengthen instructional coherence. They engage in ongoing, co-designed professional learning and continuous improvement processes that support innovation and responsiveness to learner needs.

In fully realized systems, educators are supported by structures that allow them to focus on learner growth, meaningful assessment practices, and the cultivation of durable skills and learner agency.

## **What Local Leaders Do in a Fully Realized PCBL System**

School and district leaders create the enabling conditions and strong supports that allow personalized, competency-based learning to flourish. Leaders communicate and reinforce a shared instructional vision while aligning schedules, staffing, professional learning, assessment practices, and resources around learner-centered outcomes.

Leaders support cultures of innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. They ensure that educators have time and structures for collaborative planning, reflection, and

**professional learning.** Leaders engage families, community members, and industry partners in two-way dialogue to ensure that the learning provided in each classroom is relevant to the needs of the community and workplace

In fully realized systems, local leaders balance coherence with flexibility, creating conditions that support consistency in learner experience while honoring local context and community priorities.

### **What the State Does in a Fully Realized PCBL System**

At the state level, policies, accountability structures, funding mechanisms, guidance documents, and professional learning supports are aligned to reinforce learner-centered, competency-based approaches and are responsive to districts' unique entry points.

State leaders support innovation while creating coherence across initiatives, systems, and expectations. Policies are designed to remove unnecessary barriers to implementation and provide flexibility for systems exploring more personalized and competency-based approaches.

The state also invests in long-term conditions that support successful implementation, including educator capacity-building, modernized assessment and reporting systems, technology infrastructure, and opportunities for cross-system collaboration and learning.

In fully realized systems, state policy and guidance reinforce the belief that all learners deserve access to rigorous, meaningful, and future-ready learning experiences regardless of geography or circumstance.

### **Conditions for Statewide Success**

Nevada's work toward personalized, competency-based learning depends on more than isolated classroom practices. It requires coherent system conditions that support learners and educators over time.

These conditions include time and structures for educator collaboration, sustained job-embedded professional learning, leadership alignment around a shared instructional vision, assessment literacy, flexible systems that support learner pacing and pathways, and strong partnerships with families and communities.

As Nevada continues to explore future-ready systems in an increasingly AI-augmented world, it will be essential to maintain a strong focus on the human dimensions of learning: relationships, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and learner agency. Successful implementation also requires systems to examine which existing structures, practices, or initiatives may need to evolve, align, or be phased out in order to create greater coherence for educators and learners.



## Part II: Pathways Into Practice

Across Nevada there are schools and districts already engaging in many aspects of personalized, competency-based learning. Some systems are beginning with stronger learner agency routines or performance assessment practices. Others are focused on designing developmental progressions, affirming design principles of learning, creating advisory structures, or building more coherent instructional systems.

The pathways into this work are not linear, and no single implementation sequence will fit every community. Systems begin from different conditions, with different assets, constraints, and priorities. Likewise, systems may move across multiple entry points simultaneously depending on context, instructional focus, and local priorities.

Part II is designed to help Nevada educators, leaders, and policymakers recognize common entry points into PCBL implementation and identify the kinds of supports, routines, and enabling conditions that help the work become coherent and sustainable over time.

### Exploring Common Entry Points

The following *common entry points* describe patterns systems may recognize in their current work. They are not intended to categorize or rank districts, schools, or educators nor are they intended to suggest that implementation occurs in a fixed sequence. Instead, they are intended to reflect a myriad of pathways that systems take as they reimagine classrooms, schools, and districts as learner-centered systems committed to ensuring that Nevada’s young people are future ready. In practice, many systems will identify with more than one entry point at the same time depending on local context, grade level, instructional priorities, and leadership structures.

#### EMERGING

<b>Snapshot</b>	Interest in PCBL is high and there are promising pockets, but efforts are scattered and often driven by individual champions, grants, or site-by-site priorities. Definitions vary and teams may be using the same words to mean different things.
<b>Common Signals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● PCBL-aligned practices exist inconsistently by classroom or program.</li><li>● Shared language is limited for competency, mastery, evidence, progression, and student agency.</li><li>● Evidence of learning exists, but measurement expectations vary and tools do not line up.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional learning interest is high and capacity is constrained due to competing initiatives and limited coaching time.</li> </ul>
<b>Supports that Promote Progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A shared definition of PCBL for the local context that is simple, specific, and usable in classrooms.</li> <li>A short list of high-leverage practices that unify early work such as learning targets, success criteria, and student goal routines.</li> <li>A lightweight implementation team and a thin set of baseline indicators so the system can learn what is taking hold.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks to Avoid</b>	Jumping to large system changes such as grading overhaul, schedule redesign, or new platforms before shared language, shifting mindsets, and repeatable routines exist.

## CONNECTING

<b>Snapshot</b>	Schools and teams are beginning to connect isolated innovations into a more coherent instructional approach. Leaders and educators are working to align language, expectations, and learner experiences across classrooms or programs.
<b>Common Signals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple teams or schools are experimenting with related learner-centered practices.</li> <li>Conversations about instructional coherence, learner agency, and evidence of learning are increasing.</li> <li>Some common tools or practices are emerging across teams or grade levels.</li> <li>Leaders are beginning to identify where practices align and where fragmentation still exists.</li> </ul>
<b>Supports that Promote Progress</b>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative planning structures that allow teams to design and calibrate together.</li> <li>• Leadership alignment around a clear instructional vision.</li> <li>• Shared examples of learner work and demonstrations of mastery.</li> <li>• Clear communication about why the work matters and how initiatives connect.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks to Avoid</b>	Adding new initiatives faster than teams can integrate them, or focusing on terminology and compliance without improving the learner experience.

## DEEPENING

<b>Snapshot</b>	Systems are strengthening and refining implementation practices. Learners experience greater ownership, educators collaborate more consistently around evidence of learning, and instructional, assessment, and support systems are becoming more aligned.
<b>Common Signals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner agency routines are becoming more visible and consistent.</li> <li>• Performance assessment practices are expanding.</li> <li>• Educators are collaborating and calibrating around evidence of learning and mastery expectations.</li> <li>• Feedback and grading practices are beginning to align more closely to competencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Supports that Promote Progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-designed, job-embedded professional learning and instructional coaching.</li> <li>• Protected collaboration time focused on learner work and instructional design.</li> <li>• Calibration processes that strengthen consistency around rigor and mastery.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family and community engagement that helps stakeholders understand the shift in practice and invites them to be partners in the work.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks to Avoid</b>	Overemphasizing tools, platforms, or isolated instructional strategies instead of continuing to strengthen instructional coherence and adult capacity.

## EXPANDING

<b>Snapshot</b>	Systems are scaling coherent learner-centered and competency-based practices across schools, grade bands, or programs. Leadership teams focus on sustaining implementation quality while strengthening alignment across policies, structures, and learner experiences.
<b>Common Signals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More consistent learner-centered instructional expectations exist across schools or departments.</li> <li>Assessment, grading, and instructional practices are becoming more aligned.</li> <li>Flexible pathways and demonstrations of learning are expanding.</li> <li>Cross-school collaboration and leadership learning are becoming more common.</li> </ul>
<b>Supports that Promote Progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-system learning networks and leadership collaboration.</li> <li>Professional learning systems that reinforce shared instructional expectations.</li> <li>Clear implementation indicators and opportunities for reflection and refinement.</li> <li>Policy flexibility and aligned resource allocation.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks to Avoid</b>	Scaling practices too quickly without maintaining coherence, consistency, or meaningful stakeholder communication.

## TRANSFORMING

<b>Snapshot</b>	Learner-centered, competency-based approaches are embedded across system structures, policies, and instructional practices. Learning experiences, assessment systems, schedules, supports, and community partnerships operate as part of a coherent and continuously improving system.
<b>Common Signals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learners progress through flexible pacing and multiple pathways.</li><li>• Assessment and reporting systems are aligned to competencies and demonstrations of learning.</li><li>• Schedules, staffing structures, onboarding systems, and learner supports are designed around learner needs.</li><li>• Community, workforce, and postsecondary partnerships are deeply integrated into learner experiences.</li></ul>
<b>Supports that Promote Progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuous improvement structures that allow systems to adapt over time.</li><li>• Strong alignment between policy, practice, and learner experience.</li><li>• Modernized reporting systems and learner records.</li><li>• Sustained investment in leadership development, educator capacity, and community partnerships.</li></ul>
<b>Risks to Avoid</b>	Treating transformation as complete rather than continuing to learn, adapt, and respond to evolving learner and community needs.

## Implementation Considerations and Supports

Implementation is most successful when systems approach personalized, competency-based learning as a long-term process of continuous learning and refinement rather than a short-term initiative. Successful implementation of personalized, competency-based learning requires sustained attention to adult learning, system coherence, and continuous improvement.

Districts and schools benefit from structures that support collaboration, coaching, shared instructional vision, and opportunities for educators to learn from one another over time. Systems also benefit from policy flexibility, aligned accountability structures, and clear communication with families and communities about the purpose and goals of the work.

As systems adopt new practices, it is equally important to consider which existing structures or routines may need to shift or be let go in order to create space for more coherent learner-centered approaches.

## Conclusion

Nevada's work toward personalized, competency-based learning reflects a broader commitment to ensuring that every learner experiences meaningful, equitable, and future-ready learning opportunities.

This document is intended to serve as both a shared statewide vision and a practical implementation companion. It recognizes that systems across Nevada are beginning from different places while affirming a shared commitment to creating learning environments where learners demonstrate mastery, exercise agency, receive differentiated support, and engage in rigorous and transferable learning experiences.

As Nevada continues this work, the state has an opportunity to build stronger coherence across policy, practice, leadership, and learner experience in ways that support innovation while ensuring more equitable and future-ready opportunities for all learners.