



# Impact of competency-based pathways on the high school to college transition

Redefining the High School to College Transition in Illinois | April 29, 2015



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# This afternoon we will focus on answering several questions about CBP and the high school to college transition



- ◆ What are competency-based pathways (CBP)?
- ◆ What is the state/district policy landscape for competency-based graduation requirements and credit determinations?
- ◆ How can states, districts, postsecondary partners and others work together to pave the way for CBP toward and beyond college and career readiness?



# Background



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This working definition has helped us begin to articulate how CBP supports college and career readiness for ALL students



## CBP can help all students reach college and career readiness through the following strategies:

- ◆ Students advance upon demonstrated **mastery**
- ◆ Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students
- ◆ Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students
- ◆ Students receive **rapid, differentiated support** based on their individual learning needs
- ◆ Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include **application and creation of knowledge**
- ◆ The process of reaching learning outcomes encourages students to develop **skills and dispositions important for success in college, careers, and citizenship**



# Our work with states and districts has illuminated ways in which CBP should promote equity

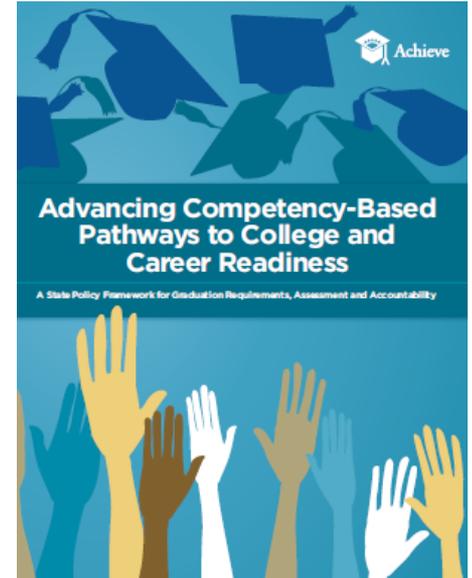


- ◆ Shifting to a system in which all students must demonstrate mastery on standards or competencies before moving ahead, **eliminating the possibility that learning gaps endure** and grow for students throughout their schooling
- ◆ Focusing the system on real-time, embedded **supports for all students who struggle to master standards** and **providing more time** for students who need it
- ◆ Providing appropriate **flexibility** in how students demonstrate mastery, giving them more “voice and choice” in their education
- ◆ Encouraging instructional environments in which students collaborate, which is a particular benefit for ELLs
- ◆ Heightening the level of **transparency** for students about what is expected from them to demonstrate mastery – giving them access to and ownership of their own data, learning goals and rubrics/taxonomies to clarify what reaching mastery means



# The state policy framework outlines key decisions for states across these policy areas

- ◆ **Purpose:** to assist states in building toward statewide adoption and implementation of competency-based pathways (CBP) that support all students in reaching college and career readiness
- ◆ **Focus areas:** **graduation requirements**, assessment and accountability, *given that states must address these areas to reach a cross-cutting, accepted definition of competency that equates to a college- and career-ready level of performance*
- ◆ **Format:** designed to inform planning conversations, including setting a vision for a state policy structure and identifying and weighing options to move toward this vision



**The framework recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy to advancing policies that support CBP, that everything does not have to happen at once, and that both the vision and approach to implementation will vary greatly across states.**



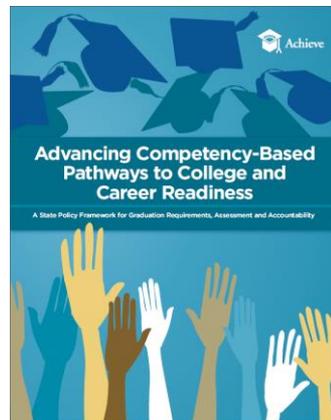
# The framework outlines unique purposes for graduation requirements in a competency-based environment



## Graduation Requirements

### Purposes

States have a variety of purposes in setting high school graduation requirements: to clarify the meaning of the high school diploma, to ensure it has value, to reinforce the need for all students to have access to rigorous content, to align the K–12 system with postsecondary education and career expectations, and many others. States that define graduation requirements that allow or require the use of competency-based methods to determine whether students have met standards ("competency-based graduation requirements") may be thinking of these purposes as well as many others: to empower students to choose their own pathway to meeting standards, to encourage learning outside the classroom environment, to address persistent inequities caused by students progressing through a course of study without first demonstrating mastery of essential knowledge and skills, to lift the ceiling for students who want to progress at a faster pace, and to provide flexibility and opportunity for students who need to accelerate quickly to learn and demonstrate their learning in a meaningful way. These graduation requirements can also create a starting point for building new opportunities, such as early college programs, dual enrollment and apprenticeship programs, as on-ramps to postsecondary education and careers for high school students who meet expectations for graduation well before they leave high school. As well, states that adopt competency-based graduation requirements will likely do so with the intent of requiring competency-based approaches for students to progress through their entire K–12 course of study.



# The framework details key decisions for states in five key areas



- ◆ Characteristics
- ◆ Timing and frequency
- ◆ State role in advancing change
- ◆ Ensuring quality, consistency and alignment
- ◆ **Postsecondary alignment, credibility and use**

## Key Decisions

Given the variability in purposes and policy context describe decisions to make in adopting and successfully implementing ways of allowing for competency-based approaches to award

### Characteristics

- How will
- What de policy?
- How will

### Timing and Frequency

- If the sta students move thr
- At what high scho

### State Role in Advancing Change

- What rol graduati
- What rol methods



# Policy landscape



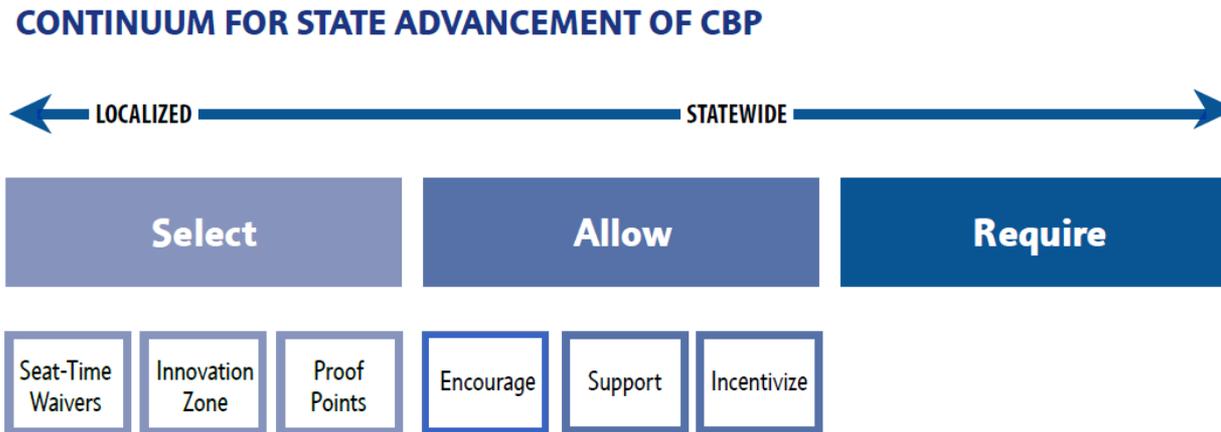
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The state policy framework includes a visioning exercise to set the foundation for policy and practice



States need to determine how CBP might best take root across districts and what role the state will play.



# States have taken three different approaches to defining competency-based graduation requirements that apply to all districts



- ◆ Students must reach proficiency in all state standards (ME and VT)
- ◆ Students must complete course requirements - not tied to seat time - and statewide graduation competencies (NH)
- ◆ Students must reach threshold scores on a menu of assessment options (CO)



## Several approaches are also being taken to ensure students can earn credit without regard to seat time



- ◆ Seat time waivers (MI)
- ◆ Specific *flexibility* for districts to offer competency-based credit in lieu of seat time requirements (CT, KY, LA)
- ◆ State *requirement* that districts offer competency-based credit in lieu of seat time requirements (NV)
- ◆ Statewide credit advancement policies – usually tied to scores on end of course assessments (AL, FL, NY, TX)
- ◆ Statewide policies that define credit in ways not tied to seat time (MD, RI, WA)



# Paving the way forward



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# States and districts first need to engage stakeholders to set the vision for advancing CBP



## State leaders should identify stakeholders and partners by asking themselves questions such as the following:

- ◆ What individuals or organizations will help us in adopting and implementing a competency-based education system? Where does authority for policy change lie?
- ◆ What individuals or organizations will be most affected by a shift to a competency-based system, and whose partnership will be most needed to ensure that policy and implementation are well designed and carried out?
- ◆ What individuals or organizations will we need to focus on in communicating what competency-based education is and what implications it could have for students?
- ◆ Given the potential for leadership turnover in coming years, who is needed to ensure sustainability of reforms?



Together they should develop a clear rationale for advancing CBP



**The first, and most critical, charge will be to articulate why the state is pursuing CBP, to answer questions such as the following:**

- ◆ Do we anticipate that CBP will help the state realize its goals and aspirations for students and help students realize their goals and aspirations for themselves? If so, why?
- ◆ Do we anticipate that CBP will support other reform priorities, such as instruction based on the CCSS, personalized learning and teacher effectiveness? If so, why?
- ◆ Do we anticipate that CBP will help the state address priority problems, such as pervasive disparities in achievement and attainment among student groups? If so, why?



# Achieve has developed a suite of resources to help states, districts and partners communicate about CBP



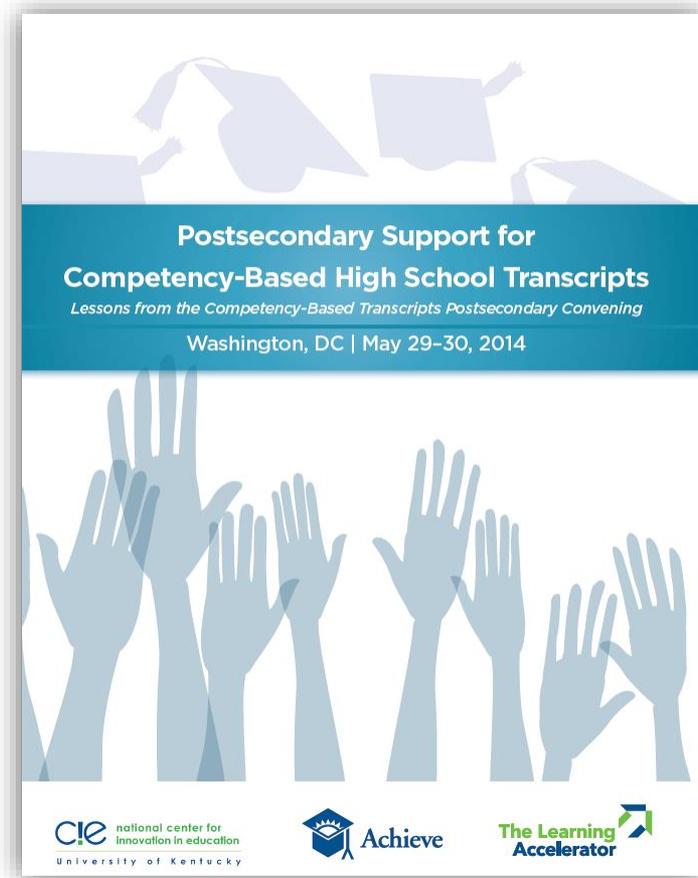
- ◆ Suite of resources to help states articulate the value and need for competency-based pathways.
- ◆ Can be adapted for use by states, districts, advocates and others.

## ***The Toolkit includes:***

- Communications Planning Tool
- Messaging Document
- Student Success Stories Infographic
- Stakeholder Engagement Worksheet
- Exemplar Communications Documents
- FAQs



# Engagement across K-12 and postsecondary will also help address common issues



**Parent concerns about how high school transcripts will be received by postsecondary institutions is one of the most common issues in implementation**



# Questions and discussion



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# State Implementation Approaches to Competency- Based Pathways

Oregon Education Investment Board – Best Practices  
in Student Transition Subcommittee | Jan. 13, 2015