

Curriculum Corner



THE OFFICIAL CURRICULUM NEWSLETTER OF SAU 7

WHAT IS COMPETENCY-BASED GRADING?

SAU7 schools believe that the purpose of grading is to communicate student achievement. Grades are not about what students earn; they are about what students learn. All teachers use the same grading practices in their classrooms. This promotes grades that are consistent, accurate, meaningful, and supportive of learning.

Traditionally, teachers have faced the complex challenge of integrating various factors—such as academic performance on different scales, behavioral incidents, late or missing assignments, and observations—to calculate a student's overall grade. This process has often led to inconsistencies, making it difficult to track how final grades were determined. As Maya Angelou wisely said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better."

Since 2020, SAU 7 teachers have embraced this philosophy by refining their grading practices. In a competency-based system, grades are tied directly to well-defined learning objectives. Teachers have worked diligently to align competencies and standards within rubrics, ensuring that expectations for each learning indicator are clear. In SAU 7, the grading indicators are: Beginning (1), Approaching (2), Proficient (3), and Expanding (4).

In a competency-based system, academic performance is assessed separately from

behaviors and other "transferable skills," such as neatness, collaboration, and active class participation. This distinction allows students, teachers, and parents to gain a clearer understanding of a student's true knowledge and skills, while identifying areas where additional support may be needed.

SAU 7 schools recognize that effective learners are able to employ and develop strategies, habits, and skills that prepare them to be effective lifelong learners and contributors in our society. These skills are defined through four Transferable Skills and are integrated into learning activities and assessments. Self-assessment and teacher feedback provide an ongoing cycle of reflection and opportunities for continued growth.

Collaborator: I can work in diverse groups to achieve a common goal and produce a quality product while appreciating individual contributions.

Communicator: I can use various media to interpret, question, and express knowledge, information, ideas, feelings, and reasoning to create mutual understanding and accomplish goals and tasks.

Innovative Thinker: I can use original and flexible thinking to communicate my ideas or construct a unique product or solution.

Self-Directed Learner: I can initiate and manage my learning, and demonstrate a "growth" mindset, through self-awareness, self-motivation, self-control, self-advocacy and adaptability as a reflective learner.



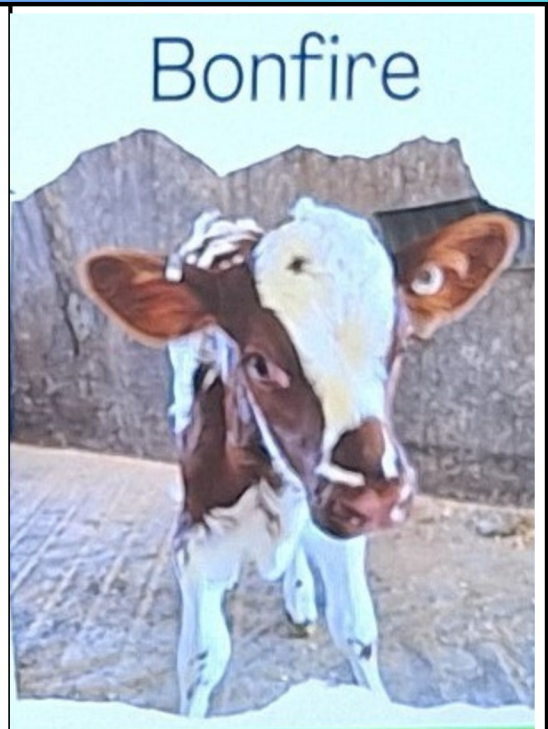
Looking for a quick reference guide to have available when you have questions about Competency Based Education? Grab a copy of one of the Parent Reporting Guides!

Go to www.sau7.org > Click on "Departments" > Click on "Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment" > In the first light green box there is a white drop-down menu titled "Parent Reporting Guides."

~ In Our Schools ~

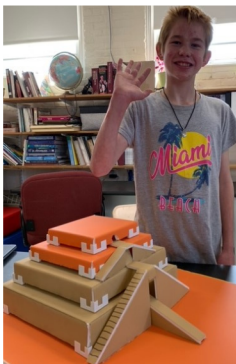
Colebrook Academy & Elementary School first grade teacher Debra Mardin shares, "Our first grade class has adopted a baby calf! It lives at a farm in Shoreham, VT. We will be watching it grow and learn about farming all year long!

We learned about the farm this week and watched a video about life on the dairy farm. We did a dot to dot and our own illustrations of a calf. We also made predictions on how much we think our baby calf will weigh. We are all looking forward to the announcement telling us about our calf on Tuesday, October 15th. There are lessons that accompany our cow updates and our class is very excited!!"



~ In Our Schools ~

Pittsburg Middle & High School Social Studies teacher Hannah Kingsbury shares, "Students are studying Ancient Mesopotamia. They created 3D Ziggurats from many different materials such as cardboard, clay, LEGOS, wood, foam board, plastic from a 3D printer, and lots of tape and hot glue! They worked hard on these projects that were completed at home."



SAU 7 Timeline

This is a brief overview of key activities and benchmarks for the design and implementation of a competency-based learning system in SAU 7.

20-22

- Formation of the Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment (CIA) Team, comprised of administration & teacher leaders, hold monthly meetings
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at grade and/or subject level are implemented; meet with the Curriculum Director throughout the year and on early release days
- Summer Design Studio workshops with consultants from V&S School Solutions are held each year
- Draft competency documents are created for SAU 7, grades K-12, based on the State of NH Model Competencies, Next Generation Science Standards, & Social Studies C3 Framework

22-23

- Regular PLC meetings with Curriculum Director continue
- Teams work on creating Quality Performance Assessments, rubrics, assessment/curriculum maps, and determine Priority Standards & Learning Targets
- Summer Design Studio allows continued consultation and work time with V&S School Solutions. During this workshop, district-wide rubric language describing each indicator (level 1-4) is determined.
- Alma preparations underway as we prepare to change our Student Information System (SIS). Alma is set up to allow grading aligned with competency-based education.
- CIA team meets monthly and contributes ideas to what grading in a competency-based system will look like in SAU 7

23-24

- Presentations to SAU 7 School Board, student & teacher information & training sessions, presentations at Open House in each school
- Teacher training in Alma during the summer allows for all staff to fully implement the program starting this year. Alma is set up for teachers to grade and report on student progress with competencies in each subject.
- Initial implementation of competency based grading, implementing rubrics & competencies
- CIA team meets monthly and works on Transferable Skills & other tasks that arise
- Administrative team works on finalizing FAQ document, course syllabus template, & SAU 7 Grading Guidelines & Expectations document
- Guides and other documents created for parents, students, and staff to reference.
- PLC teams meet quarterly with the Curriculum Director to continue progressing forward. During the second half of the year, teams reflect on and make adjustments to Priority Standards & Learning Targets.

24-25

- Preparations & planning for a Higher Ed Panel discussion with college admissions officers
- Full implementation of Transferable Skills & Competencies, grades K-12, including grading on a 4-point scale for all grades.
- Quarterly meetings with all PLCs continue with the Curriculum Director. Teams also meet during early release workshop times. Teams continue work with assessments, mapping, rubrics, data, instruction, units, competencies, standards, and learning targets.
- Continued professional development, including summer Design Studio workshops and sessions with V&S School Solutions provide further guidance and learning opportunities.