

# Curriculum Corner



THE OFFICIAL CURRICULUM NEWSLETTER OF SAU 7

## ADDRESSING THE BURNING QUESTION: WILL A COMPETENCY-BASED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION NEGATIVELY IMPACT MY CHILD'S CHANCES OF COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE?

This question has been a recurring topic since we began our transition to competency-based education (CBE), dating back to 2020 when we hosted our initial workshops with consultants Brian Stack and Jon Vander Els. It is a valid concern and one that warrants further exploration.

Recently, several colleges and universities from across New England joined us for a Zoom session to address questions regarding college acceptance, particularly for students graduating from a competency-based education system. If you were unable to attend the session, we encourage you to watch the recording, which is available on the SAU7.org website. Navigate to "Departments" and select "Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment" to find the recording link at the top of the page.

Below, we have summarized the written feedback we received from these institutions prior to the Zoom session. Please note that we are continuing to reach out to additional colleges and universities and are awaiting responses, as this is a particularly busy time for admissions offices. The Zoom recording contains more detailed insights than what is provided here. If you would like contact information for any of the participating colleges or universities, please don't hesitate to reach out!

College/University	Does a student who was part of a CBE grading system in high school (i.e., 4.0 grading scale) have the same ability to be accepted to your college as one from a traditional grading (i.e., 100-point scale) system?
White Mountains Community College	Yes. We require students to have an official High School transcript sent to our college.
Saint Anselm College	Yes. We convert a 100-point scale onto a 4.0 scale.
Rivier University	Yes. We do not penalize students for the grading scale of their high school and do recalculations of GPA, when necessary, in order to make admittance as level of a playing field as possible.
Plymouth State University	Yes.
University of Maine at Farmington	Yes.
Colby Sawyer College	Yes.
Dartmouth College	Yes. We evaluate each student in their individual context, including their high school context. Whether a school uses numerical grades or competencies does not affect that student's admissions process. Whatever a school provides, we will be able to evaluate students' academic abilities. We encourage any school considering changing its grading system to make a decision that is most beneficial for that own school's students and circumstances. We evaluate students in their context, and a CBE will not affect a student's chances of admission.
Franklin Pierce University	Yes. The shift to CBE would not affect anyone at FPU, for we are used to schools having a wide variety of different transcripts and we adapt to each one. We have our own rubric that we use, based on what the school profile says.

# Happy New Year

## USING GRADES TO COMMUNICATE

Grades are a communication tool and serve a variety of purposes for a range of audiences. The primary purpose of a grading system is to clearly, accurately, consistently, and fairly communicate learning progress and achievement. The chart below provides an overview of how various audiences use grades.

In order to effectively summarize the academic progress of our learners to these various audiences, SAU 7 uses grades to communicate:

- Summative assessment grades
- Overall competency grades
- Overall Transferable Skills
- Class/course grades and Grade Point Averages (GPA) for 9-12
- Transcripts for 9-12

Audience(s)	Purpose for Using Grades
Learners	To utilize feedback for growth and development of skills and concepts
Teachers	To plan ongoing learning and assessment and to communicate with students, parents, and colleagues
Parents	To evaluate their children's progress
External Organizations	To make important determinations about our learners (i.e., discounts, employment, skill capability, etc.)
Colleges/Universities	For admission to higher education institutions
Community/State/National Organizations	To award special recognition and scholarships and to determine participation in athletic and academic programs.



## Transferable Skills

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. The four transferable skills are:

- **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.

**Personal Competency development is reported using the following scale for K-12:**

4	<b>Expanding</b>	The learner independently and regularly performs the expectations.
3	<b>Proficient</b>	The learner needs occasional prompting or support in order to perform the expectations.
2	<b>Approaching</b>	The learner inconsistently performs and/or needs routine support in order to perform the expectations.
1	<b>Beginning</b>	The learner needs modeling and/or direct support or explanation in order to perform the expectations.

## ~ In Our Schools ~

Pittsburg School Librarian Ann Gray shares, “I just finished doing my first author study with my first and second graders. We spent several weeks learning about Mo Willems and reading many of his books and doing corresponding activities. Next I am about to start a unit whereby I will be pairing up fiction and nonfiction books to examine what we can learn from both types of books. Today I will read a book called Just Ducks! (fiction) and tomorrow they will hear a book called Hip-Pocket Papa (nonfiction). These two books will help the students to learn about ways animals depend on their environment for survival.”





## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD ON HOW TO IMPROVE THEIR GRADE



With the shift to competency based grading, parents & guardians may find that some of the questions they used to ask their children no longer align. Here are some examples of questions you can ask your child to elicit more information!

### INSTEAD OF:

- Can you get extra credit?
- What can you do to raise your grade?
- Why did you miss points on your homework assignment?

### TRY THESE!

- What is the standard you are practicing tonight?
- When is your next opportunity to reassess?
- What standards do you still need to practice?
- What practice or reteaching opportunities do you need to do to prepare for the next assessment?



Information from Matt Townsley

