



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Strategic Plan for Competency-Based Education Program

*SL 2021-25, sec. 3.5(b), as enacted by
SL2021-180, sec. 7.27(a)*

Date Due: March 15, 2022
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2021-2022

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PURPOSE

The Strategic Plan for a Competency-Based Education Program is in submission of a comprehensive, strategic plan for the program, including the method of deployment of the competency-based education program, the predicted number of students who may earn credit by demonstrating content mastery and the method of assessment, the impact on teachers and how the program will be used for professional development and competency, and a detailed description of the estimated cost of the program, including the identification of other sources of funds for the program after the deadline established by federal law and guidelines for expenditure of federal funds. In addition, this report will provide information pertaining to the Competency-Based Assessment (CBA) tool utilized to provide successful outcomes from the Summer Bridge Academy and Summer Programming, as required by S.L. 2021-7, HB82.

BACKGROUND

On April 29, 2021, the North Carolina General Assembly passed SL2021-7 Summer Learning Choice for NC Families.¹ The law established School Extension Learning Recovery and Enrichment programs and required Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and encouraged Charter Schools to implement those programs for at-risk students² as defined in G.S. 115C-105.41(a). Identified students are at risk for academic failure and are not successfully progressing toward grade promotion and graduation, beginning in kindergarten. Identification shall occur as early as can reasonably be done and can be based on grades, observations, diagnostic and formative assessments, state assessments, and other factors, including reading on grade level, that impact student performance that teachers and administrators consider appropriate, without having to await the results of end-of-grade or end-of-course tests. The law stipulated that program proposals were to be evaluated and approved by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). The newly established Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration (OLR) was tasked with establishment of the guidelines consistent with the law and development of a process for approval. Program guidelines included the following: Instructional and Program Requirements, Student Participation, Teacher Compensation, and Program Assessments.³

Program Assessments

Program Assessments involved competency-based assessments and progression to ensure that instruction was provided based on students' individual needs so that students could progress efficiently and effectively toward credit recovery.

- For K–8 students, at a minimum, the program will be evaluated using competency-based assessments and progression and retention rates.
- For 9–12 students, at a minimum, the program will be evaluated by the number of students who receive credit recovery.
- Participating Public School Units (PSUs) shall report all the following to the NCDPI by October 30, 2021:
- Results of competency-based assessments given to students in grades K–8 at the beginning of the program.

¹ <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/House/PDF/H82v7.pdf>

² https://www.ncleg.net/enactedlegislation/statutes/html/bysection/chapter_115c/gs_115c-105.41.html

³ <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/districts-schools-support/office-learning-recovery-acceleration/school-extension-learning-and-enrichment-program-sl2021-7-hb82>

- Results of competency-based assessments given to students in grades K–8 at the conclusion of the program.
- The number of students who progressed to the next grade level after participating in the program.
- The number of students who were retained in the same grade level after participating in the program.
- The number of students who received credit recovery in high school.

COMPETENCY-BASED ASSESSMENTS

On April 19, 2021, the State Board of Education approved PRC 178 to provide funds for a single CBA per grade and subject for students in grades kindergarten through eight that may be taken at the beginning of the program and at the conclusion of the school extension program.⁴

At the direction of the State Board of Education, the NCDPI selected Curriculum Associates' i-Ready assessment for Reading and Mathematics as the recommended CBA for all LEAs. Prior to the recommendation, the OLR requested a survey of all PSUs to determine which CBA vendors were currently being used. OLR recommended and most, but not all, PSUs used i-Ready.

Of 95% of LEAs Reporting CBA pre- and post- assessments (K–8):

Data pulled and submitted to the NCDPI by vendor

- 73 LEAs used i-Ready
- 7 LEAs used Renaissance Star

Data pulled and submitted by LEA

- 25 LEAs used another vendor
- 10 LEAs used i-Ready + another vendor

SCHOOL EXTENSION PROGRAM IMPACT

Promotion and Retention

Promotion and retention data were collected from the 2020–21 Retention/Promotion Data Collection in PowerSchool. At the beginning of each school year, PSUs enter and verify whether each student was promoted or retained. For the purposes of Summer Extension Program reporting, student level enrollment records for students designated as enrolled in the summer extension program were matched to the student level Retention/Promotion data collection. This matching was done at the state level.

⁴ https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB_Meetings/ViewMeeting.aspx?S=10399&MID=9091

Table 1. Summer Extension Promotion and Retention Rates

Grade Level	Summer Extension Promotion Percent	2020–21 State Promotion Rate	Summer Extension Retention Percent	2020–21 State Retention Rate
All Grades	92.7%	95.7%	7.3%	4.3%
Grades K–5	96.0%	98.1%	4.0%	1.9%
Grades 6–8	97.9%	99.1%	2.1%	0.9%
Grades 9–12	79.3%	89.7%	20.7%	10.3%

Across all grades in the summer extension program, 92.7% of the students were promoted to the next grade. For elementary and middle grades, 96.0% and 97.9% of the students were promoted. In the high school grades, 79.3% of the students enrolled were promoted to the next grade. For all grades as well as the elementary, middle, and high school grades, these percentages are lower than the state’s 2020–21 promotion rate. Conversely, across all grades in the summer extension program, 7.3% of the students were retained. High school grades had the highest retention rate of 20.7%.

METHOD OF DEPLOYMENT OF THE COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAM

Progress Toward a Competency-Based Education Program

In anticipation of PSUs fulfilling the requirements for HB82—School Extension Learning Recovery and Enrichment Programs for the Summer 2021, the North Carolina State Board of Education defined a Competency-Based Assessment:

A Competency-Based Assessment is a tool that measures levels of student competence within a given standard by assessing progression through curriculum at a student’s own pace. The student’s demonstration of learning outcomes is considered central to the learning process and the CBA tool will provide feedback on student performance of progress and skills gained over time. Strengths will be identified as well as areas for additional support.

In May 2020, in fulfillment of the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee report, the NCDPI submitted ***Competency-Based Assessments and Teaching Model, Session Law 2019-212***. This report provided a status of progress / information on the following topics: Competency-Based Teaching; the North Carolina Standard Course of Study; Career and Technical Education Courses and Modules; Personalized Learning Framework; Home Base Suite of Tools; Digital Learning Competencies and Standards; Professional Development for Public School Units; Funding and Resources for Public School Units; Professional Development for the NCDPI Staff; Credit by Demonstrated Mastery; Differentiated Education Plans and Advanced Learning Opportunities; and Assessment Implications for Competency-Based Teaching.

In 2021, the NCDPI convened the Operation Polaris Reforming Accountability and Testing workgroup. After initial planning in 2021, the Reforming Accountability and Testing workgroup branched into two subcommittees that began meeting in January 2022 for near- and short- term

CBE and CBA efforts.

CBE Platform

The Summer Extension Learning Recovery and Enrichment Programs were an initial effort to observe a CBA tool to determine student progress and growth toward credit completion. As a next phase of the use of a CBA tool, the NCDPI will utilize the appropriated \$9,000,000 to contract with a third-party entity for a period of up to three years for a new software platform, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to evaluate and improve student learning and performance and to provide students with an individualized roadmap for improving learning and performance. The NCDPI has determined academic and non-academic criteria for the software platform and will be entering into a Request for Proposals in the Spring 2022, with intentions to contract prior to summer programming or Fall 2022 at the latest.

The CBE Platform will be a competency-based platform for academic and non-academic competencies for Grades 7–12, with the preference of Grades 2–12. It will cover the entire Standard Course of Study (SCOS) for Math; English Language Arts, and Science, with the preference to cover other subject areas. Professional Development will accompany the platform to ensure teachers have an adequate understanding of the platform and technical assistance throughout the service. Ideally, the platform will also provide more than “met” and “not met” for competency, providing an understanding of emerging, proficient, and advanced, or similar indicators to help students, teachers, leaders, and parents have a clear understanding of knowledge gaps.

Portrait of a Graduate

The NCDPI will be developing a Portrait of a Graduate in partnership with a vendor facilitator and stakeholders from across the state to build a Portrait of a Graduate that includes durable skills that North Carolina graduates should possess upon graduation. The durable skills will be measurable and determined as those that will increase employability.

CREDIT BY DEMONSTRATED MASTERY

Overview of CDM

The State Board of Education (SBE) adopted Credit by Demonstrated Mastery (CDM) as an option for students to earn credit for a course ([State Board Policy CCRE-001](#)). In this process, based upon a body-of-evidence, a district or school may award credit in a course without requiring the student to complete classroom instruction for a specified seat time (typically hours).

The SBE defines mastery as a student’s command of course material at a level that demonstrates a deep understanding of the content standards and the ability to apply knowledge of the material.

CDM specifically offers North Carolina students the opportunity to personalize and accelerate their learning, thus allowing for optimal student growth while providing an opportunity to have effective seat time to learn new content.

Students shall demonstrate mastery through a multiphase assessment, consisting of:

Phase 1: A standard examination, which shall be the EOC/EOG where applicable, or a final exam developed locally; and

Phase 2: An artifact which requires the student to apply knowledge and skills relevant to the content standards.

This multi-phase assessment process builds a body-of-evidence that allows a committee to determine if the student has a deep understanding of the standards for the course or subject area as defined by the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. This process allows students to earn credit for a course without constraint by the requirement to meet participation in a class, as stated in the definition of competency-based education: “progression is based on mastery of explicit learning objectives, or competencies, as demonstrated through evidence of student learning, rather than the time spent in a course/topic.”

The NCDPI provides resources with guidance and tools to support district and school implementation of the CDM process. While the CDM process is open to all students, it is not designed for whole groups of students. Likewise, it is not intended to replace the general accelerated pathways local school districts often provide for advanced students.

IMPACT ON TEACHERS

Overview

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Human Capital Roundtable and the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission (PEPSC) has been working on Transforming the Teacher Profession in North Carolina for the past three years, and the work continues. As a part of this effort, one of the original goals was to develop great ways to keep teachers in the classroom and attract highly qualified, diverse candidates into the profession. Within the proposed and developing framework that was presented to the State Board of Education in February 2021, Pathways to Excellence for Teaching Professionals, and the overarching goal was to create a teacher licensure program that would be outcomes based rather than continuing to rely on the current input-based model.

Professional Development and Competency

Within the Pathways to Excellence for Teaching Professionals, the notion of continuous improvement is infused throughout the five-year period. Therefore, the proposed renewal process will rely on teachers demonstrating positive outcomes for students and the demonstration of mastery of content, skills, competencies, and instructional capabilities that are manifested in the classroom. Multiple measures are fundamental to teachers demonstrating student outcomes and mastery of the competencies.

As an entry point into CBE, the Division of Innovative Practices and Programs is providing a Project-Based Learning (PBL) Academy from January 2022 through June 2022. Participants were selected from all eight State Board of Education regions. The NCDPI staff is collaborating, at no cost to the Department or PSU participants, with Open Way Learning and Constructive Learning Design to provide the PBL Academy. Over 220 leaders, teachers, and school board members applied for the PBL Academy; 52 participants in PSU teams were admitted for the first cohort. Should additional cohorts continue, the collaborating partners will require funding.

ASSOCIATED COSTS AND PROJECTED FUNDING EXPENDITURES

CBE Platform

The CBE Platform will be funded at a cost of \$9,000,000 for up to three years’ use of that

platform. To continue the CBE Platform beyond the three years, additional funding will need to be appropriated.

Portrait of a Graduate

The Portrait of a Graduate is funded at a cost of \$192,500. This funding is one-time funding, with the option to renew for up to two additional years, should additional work need to continue (e.g. Portrait of an Educator).

Credit by Demonstrated Mastery

To date, based on the current CDM approach, no additional funding is required beyond the current operating budget for CDM at the state and local levels.

Teacher Professional Development and Competency

The NCDPI has not yet conducted a full budget analysis of a competency-based licensure program. Once the North Carolina State Board of Education has approved a final model for moving teacher licensure and continuing education to a competency-based approach, the NCDPI will begin a cost analysis for the program. Regarding the PBL Academy, should additional cohorts continue, the collaborating partners will require funding.