



Illinois State Board of Education

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2017 Competency-Based Learning Pilot Participating District Descriptions

Chicago Public School District #299

Chicago Public Schools are committed to providing students with a 21st-century education, using innovative tools, resources, and approaches that will work across an array of students. The Chicago schools selected for the competency-based pilot represent diverse student bodies from across the city.

CPS' competency-based learning model is designed to help students develop the skills they need to succeed in college, career, and life. CPS' six participating schools will offer students customized learning instruction that relies on an advanced evaluation system to gauge mastery of essential skills.

"Investing in cutting-edge education strategies have helped transform Chicago Public Schools into a district that is leading the country in academic growth, and we're excited to start this pilot to drive new levels of achievement for Chicago students," said Chief Education Officer Dr. Janice K. Jackson. "This groundbreaking pilot gives Chicago schools the resources to remain at the forefront of education policy by developing an instructional model that will not only serve an array of students, but also provide them with customized instruction that will prepare them to fully live up to their potential."

As part of this effort, CPS will develop standards and assessment tools; expand specialized education pathways, including dual credit and vocational training programs; adapt evaluation measures in conjunction with stakeholders; and develop data-based best practices.

CPS worked with a diverse group of schools to apply for and carry out the pilot. All demonstrated the ability to successfully carry out the objectives, based on numerous meetings with principals, educators, and stakeholders. CPS schools include:

- Gwendolyn Brooks: Selective Enrollment school on the far south side (grades 7-12)
- Southside Occupational: Transitional school for special needs (ages 16- 21)
- Lindblom Math & Science Academy: Selective Enrollment school on the south side (grades 7-12)
- York High School: Learning facility within the Cook County jail for young adults awaiting adjudication (ages 18-21)
- Benito Juarez Community Academy: Neighborhood school with an International Baccalaureate curriculum on the near south side (grades 9-12)
- Walter Payton: Selective Enrollment school on Chicago's north side (grades 9-12)

Each school has adopted an individualized pilot structure designed to best serve their student populations, and schools are working to prepare for a successful implementation of the pilot beginning in the 2018-19 school year.

East St. Louis School District #189

District 189 is pleased to be part of the first cohort within the state competency-based pilot program. We believe that our current community collaboratives, unique student demographics, and academic momentum position us to be well-suited for piloting a competency-based high school graduation diploma.

Our committee plans to focus on extensive preparations and planning from spring 2017 until implementation in the 2018-19 school year. We intend to phase in the competency-based education system, beginning with students in the alternative high school and career and technical education program at our primary high school. The purpose of our competency-based education system will be for learning recovery and as an accelerator program.

Our goals include:

- Goal 1: Develop competency-based learning system to be phased in within District 189 over three years, beginning with SY 2018-19.
- Goal 2: Develop plan for course grading based on mastering competencies and a system for collecting and assessing student progress toward competency attainment.
- Goal 3: Develop multiple assessment measures to determine mastery, with final competency definition equating to a college- and career-ready level of performance.
- Goal 4: Develop plan for administrator, educator, and support staff professional development to support the competency-based learning system.

Huntley Community School District #158

The Huntley High School pilot plan is designed to include multiple subject areas and to serve a subset of students in 11th and 12th grades by changing their learning experience.

The working belief behind the proposal is that a competency-based approach takes the focus away from what students are learning and shifts the focus to how they will learn it. In this manner, students will excel at necessary independent learning behaviors and skills, in addition to mastering subject area competencies.

Huntley High School's pilot will attempt to break down the walls of the traditional classroom and allow students to progress at a personalized pace. Teachers will guide their progress and offer seminar-like instruction, allowing students to demonstrate mastery of learning standards across subject areas rather than completing courses.

Kankakee School District #111

School District 111, its teachers, and the Kankakee community are committed to reinventing the high school experience to better prepare youth for postsecondary opportunities and civic life. Support for high school redesign spans 34 organizations, including Iroquois-Kankakee Regional Office of Education, Coalition for Hope & Excellence in Education, Olivet Nazarene University and Kankakee Community College, and local employers. Such strong support has given SD 111 the opportunity to plan the redesign and implementation phases of such since 2014-15.

The proposed competency-based pilot will be a core innovative strategy in this mission and will build on a number of competency-based strategies already implemented by SD 111 to personalize the learning environment and improve student outcomes, including blended learning, dual enrollment, project-based and linked learning, and credit recovery.

SD 111's Kankakee High School will expand on career academies that traditionally merely complemented core curriculum. This will be done by working with community partners and industry to develop the high school curriculum to reflect competency-based systems and contextualize and embed postsecondary relevance and experiences. The redesign will reflect the Office of New School Models; the School District of Philadelphia's Competency Toolkit; the International Center for Leadership in Education's Redefining College and Career Readiness for 21st Century strategies; and P-Tech, Project Lead the Way, and Bob Pearlman Innovation Labs models.

Redesigning the high school experience will increase students graduating college- and career-ready – meeting the needs of students, improving school performance, and supporting the demands of industry.

Peoria District #150

Peoria Public Schools are prepared to reimagine high school with the help of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) Pilot, which aligns with the district's vision of "taking pride in educating and graduating each student prepared and inspired to contribute to the world." The district anticipates that the CBE Pilot will use structures that are outlined in its strategic plan and are already in place to open up a vast array of opportunities for students to be successful and complete their high school graduation requirements while also pursuing a pathway toward their college and career goals.

The goal of Phase 1 of the Competency-Based Education Pilot is to identify those math, English, and science competencies related to the pathway capstone courses for the district's high school manufacturing, culinary, cosmetology, construction, and Project Lead the Way career programs; integrate them into the curriculum for those courses so that students could be given credit for the math, English, and/or science required for graduation; and develop the assessment measures to determine mastery of the competencies. The competencies for the courses would be identified from Common Core State Standards. Integrated projects, combining academic instruction in math, English, and/or science and demonstration of the competencies, will require flexibility. Peoria Public Schools plan to design graduation requirements in the form of competencies and performance-based assessments tailored to various career pathways. Having flexibility with clock hours will allow for the student day to be re-conceptualized with time to not only be in the blended project-based experience, but also a chance to be "in the field" or working directly with experts. The content area (certified) specialist will work with a career-based course instructor to build out the competencies of mastery, but the course could be taught by either teacher.

The initiative is expected to engage students in school who might otherwise drop out or find school irrelevant. On the Redefining Ready website, the powerful statement that students cannot be reduced to a test score is reinforced by the district's data that approximately 40 percent of its students go directly to the workforce. In addition, the district is dedicated to improving its 6 percent dropout rate. This is supported through its work with Alignment Peoria and Pathways to Prosperity, two efforts already underway that include work based on feedback from community engagement meetings, businesses, and the trades unions.

Peoria Public Schools will begin to identify teachers and a competency-based education champion for the district and then begin planning and providing professional development immediately. The district anticipates rolling out its first CBE courses in the 2018-19 school year.

Proviso Township High School District #209

Competency-based education at Proviso East High School aims to provide learners with multiple pathways to demonstrate mastery of skills and knowledge, explore and develop their individual passions and interests, and empower them to take ownership for their own learning as they become productive citizens in an ever-changing world. Proviso East High School believes that competency-based education, working in concert with the College and Career Readiness Academies, will accelerate the process of students demonstrating mastery of a comprehensive set of rigorous and relevant competencies and will better prepare them to enter the postsecondary options of their choice. Proviso East's goal is that students be educated in a school that encourages them to become masterful in their thinking and in their ability to demonstrate that knowledge in multiple ways.

Proviso East High School's competency-based approach to teaching and learning will provide students with the time needed to master the standards and will remove the systemic constraints of the traditional educational practices of the past that do not promote the notion of proficiency for all. Instruction will also become more learner-centric in order to support students becoming partners in the educational process as they work to attain 21st-century skills. Some of the future work that must be accomplished in order to establish a comprehensive competency-based education model at Proviso East High School includes:

1. Identifying key learning standards, or standards of significance, in all content areas. This approach is designed to facilitate the transition to a wall-to-wall focus on competencies rather than credits.
2. Cross-walking the standards of significance in order to construct both content-area competencies and cross-curricular competencies. Proviso East will collaborate with its community college and higher education partners to align the standards of significance that make up the content-area and cross-curricular competencies to the colleges' standards.
3. Creating learning opportunities beyond the customary high school classroom so that students may gain access to advanced postsecondary and career-related competencies. Opportunities will include job shadowing, independent studies, internships, advanced placement studies, and postsecondary planning.
4. Crafting a set of adaptive competencies and associated indicators that students will be required to master as part of their graduation requirements.
5. Establishing demonstration classrooms in 2017-18 that are designed to be prototypes of some of our learning and strategies prior to full implementation.
6. Launching the competency-based education model in all ninth-grade courses in 2018-19 with a yearly progression thereafter.

The entire Proviso East school community is deserving of a school that prepares its students for success in a global society. No matter what role each stakeholder plays in this transformation process, all own the responsibility of fulfilling this promise knowing that the community we serve has waited long enough. It is truly time for Proviso East High School to rise up and be transformed!

Rantoul Township High School District #193

Rantoul Township High School is extremely excited to have been chosen as one of the pilot schools. This initiative is an important component of our overall plan for school improvement and greater student achievement.

Rantoul Township High School has been engaged in a five-year continuous improvement effort to increase the number of students who are college and career ready. For the purposes of this pilot, we will initially focus on the development of competency-based coursework and assessments in Algebra 1, Spanish 1, Government, U.S. History 1 and 2, English 1, and biology during the 2017-18 school year. Curriculum, assessments, and frameworks for awarding credit will be implemented for the 2018-19 school year.

Our hope is that by spring semester of 2021 we will have coursework, assessments, and a framework for awarding credit available for Spanish 1 through 4, English 1 through 4, math coursework including Algebra 1 through trigonometry, the aforementioned social science coursework, and some additional elective coursework in areas such as precision metal works, woods production, culinary arts, and business.

By allowing our students to complete these courses at an accelerated pace, they will be able to pursue postsecondary opportunities prior to a traditional four-year graduation date. Our hope is that this opportunity will not only be a benefit to Rantoul Township High School but the community as a whole.

Ridgewood High School District #234

Ridgewood Community High School District 234, founded in 1960, serves the communities of Norridge and Harwood Heights. The mission of Ridgewood High School focuses on learning: “Students will become adaptable lifelong learners and responsible, ethical citizens with the ability to make informed decisions in a changing global society.” Our program for Competency-based learning will replace the traditional process for earning grades and credit in the Ridgewood High School Math Department. The overarching goal is to put students on their fastest path to results that matter as indicated by:

Objective 1: Be able to earn credit toward education requirements in ways other than traditional coursework, including learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom setting without the constraints of seat time.

Objective 2: Advance once they have demonstrated mastery. Students shall receive more or less time and personalized instruction to demonstrate mastery without the constraints of seat time.

Objective 3: For the next generation of Ridgewood learners to succeed and thrive, their learning experiences must facilitate their development in three domains: knowledge, skills, and dispositions (employability skills) in time frames appropriate to each learner.

RHS students will focus on learning, which will enable them to earn credits based on demonstrated mastery. According to Education Reimagined (2015), each learner works toward competency and strives for mastery in three domains: knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The trajectory of each learner toward mastery is guided and tracked through progress monitoring rather than trying to achieve specific benchmarks in a fixed amount of time.

Ultimately, our goal is to use this model for all programs at Ridgewood High School.

Round Lake Area School District #116

Round Lake High School is home to just over 2,000 diverse students from the communities of Round Lake, Round Lake Beach, Round Lake Heights, Round Lake Park, and Hainesville. Prior to 2010, the school and the district experienced lagging student achievement numbers. Dr. Constance Collins was hired as the new superintendent in 2010 and began the process of radical restructuring and continuous school improvement.

Over the past seven years, Round Lake Senior High School has been implementing progressive, research-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment changes to improve student achievement. These changes were made under the direction of Dr. Donn Mendoza, current principal, and Dr. Susan Center, current assistant principal for curriculum and instruction.

The core philosophies that have guided the curriculum reform at RLHS have included Standards-Based Grading and Mastery Learning. The belief held by all staff is that learning is not time bound and students should be given the time that is personally necessary to demonstrate mastery. Some students need more time and others need less and the structures and instructional practices align to this belief.

Participation in the pilot is the next evolutionary step toward more complete competency-based education and will allow students who have demonstrated mastery the opportunity to have unique learning pathways that focus on more real-world experiences.

Williamsfield Community Unit School District #210

The Williamsfield Schools pilot program is a collaborative effort with ROE 33's Regional Alternative Education Services. The program goal is to make the high school experience less about "chasing credits" and more about building knowledge and skill. To do so, beginning with the 2017-18 school year, we will offer four new graduation pathways to complement our traditional high school diploma.

1. Diploma+ Associate's Degree
2. Diploma+ College Credits
3. Diploma+ Trade Certification
4. Diploma+ Internship/Work-Based Placement

Each new pathway will require students to go above and beyond the work necessary to earn a traditional high school diploma. Opportunities to begin engaging in high school coursework associated with each pathway are available as early as seventh grade.

To help fuel growth down each graduation pathway, we will utilize pilot flexibility to implement a practice of continual ELA/literacy, math, and science course enrollment. This practice will replace traditional course credit requirements. Our "total credit" high school graduation requirement will remain in place. However, the traditional 4.0 English credit requirement, 3.0 math credit requirement, and 2.0 science credit requirement will be replaced by a practice of continual course enrollment. This simple adjustment will increase our ability to personalize learning while inspiring our kids to move skills forward down their chosen college/career pathway.

Williamsfield Schools will also add College/Career Reading & Writing course options to fuel student literacy down the Diploma+ Trade Certification and the Diploma+ Internship/Work-Based Placement Pathways. Flexibility will be added, allowing students to engage in College/Career English courses by embedding them into Career Pathway courses, internships, and work-based experiences.

In addition, acceleration points will be created in ELA/literacy, and science, similar to what we recently implemented in math. If a student demonstrates the proper level of mastery, they will advance to complete AP courses sophomore year, beginning their work toward an associate's degree. Pilot partnerships with Carl Sandburg Community College and Northern Illinois University allow for AP and dual credit course expansion. Students will have the opportunity to complete coursework on site, online, or on a college campus in an effort to meet their pathway goals.