



Dispelling The Myths:

**Frequently Asked Questions About
Competency-Based Education**

There are many common misconceptions about personalized, competency-based learning that can make it challenging to explain. The following questions highlight those you may hear the most often from essential stakeholders – including teachers, parents, community members and students – and we’ve paired them with responses that could spark critical conversations about what competency education offers your learning community.

QUESTION

Will students spend all day on a computer or tablet?

ANSWER

Technology can be a great tool for learning, but it’s not the only one. Some students may prefer project-based work or a computer program, while others prefer pencil and paper. Competency education provides students the opportunity to learn how they learn best and to demonstrate learning in a variety of ways, rather than just taking a test or writing a paper.

QUESTION

Isn’t CBE just a new way of ensuring schools follow Common Core?

ANSWER

Standards guarantee every student an equal, quality education. It doesn’t matter what the standards are called or who created them. What is more important is that the state – be it Texas or Maine or Alaska – has chosen to use state-wide standards to ensure consistency in learning among all districts, no matter the tax-base or zip code, ensuring students in low-income and high-income districts are guaranteed a high-quality education.

QUESTION

What role does the teacher play in a competency-based classroom?

ANSWER

Relationships drive student learning in a competency-based environment. Teachers are more essential than ever before, creating unique opportunities for learning, working with students to create classroom culture, helping students discover their learning styles and working side-by-side with learners throughout the year.

QUESTION

Is CBE another workforce model?

ANSWER

Many of today's students will enter the workforce and fill jobs that have yet to be created. Through competency education, students master core academic content and demonstrate what they're learning while also developing the social emotional skills necessary to succeed in ambiguity. Skills like critical thinking, self-awareness and the ability to collaborate will help them no matter what path they choose after high school.

QUESTION

What do you mean that CBE isn't time- or seat-based?

ANSWER

Students move ahead when they have demonstrated mastery of content, not when they've reached a certain birthday. However, competency education classrooms have a class pace set by the teacher. There may be some learners who work ahead or a little behind pace, but this more student-centered approach gives the teacher greater understanding as to where each student is, and when supports are needed.

QUESTION

Traditional schooling worked for me. Why do we need something new?

ANSWER

The world has changed, and this changes what students need from their education, and by necessity, how education is delivered. Competency education is a more equitable approach that allows for the flexibility and variety that every student needs to succeed, not just the students who have been traditionally served well.

QUESTION

How will a teacher personalize a lesson for every single student?

ANSWER

A learner-centered classroom doesn't mean 25-30 individual lesson plans for each student. It's about developing student agency so they have a voice, a choice and engagement opportunities to access content in the best way for them. The school day includes instructional time with the teacher and opportunities to work independently, in pairs or with other students. Because their learning targets are transparent, students work with the teacher to determine what they need to accomplish to meet them and how they could show evidence of learning. Learning isn't a mystery, and students have a greater understanding of what they need to learn and why.

KnowledgeWorks is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing personalized learning that empowers every child to take ownership of their success. With nearly 20 years of experience exploring the future of learning, growing educator impact and working with state and federal policymakers, our passionate team partners with schools and communities to grow a system-wide approach to sustain student-centered practices so that every child graduates ready for what's next.

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