WHAT IS COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION? Competency-based education is the best approach to personalizing learning for students. While personalized learning can exist at the classroom level, competency-based education, or CBE, often emerges as a systemic approach to ensuring personalization across a state, community, school district and/or throughout a school.

A competency-based learning environment includes the following elements:

» Students move on to the next assignment or standard once they have shown that they have mastered the previous one.

» Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives designed to help students see how what they are learning now fits into their overall education and future aspirations. These learning objectives then empower students to understand why they are learning what they are learning and are applicable to what they learn in the future.

» Assessments are meaningful for students and teachers. They create a positive learning experience for students, help them understand how they can grow in their learning, and give them an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills in a variety of assessment formats.

» Students receive timely, customized support from teachers based on their individual learning needs and strengths.
HOW CAN COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

Competency-based education is based on the principle that all children can learn at high levels. Educators in competency-based education environments help students grow and deepen their learning from where they are and ensure every student succeeds, not just some.

In a personalized, competency-based learning environment, learning is focused on:

» Equal opportunity: All students are challenged to master rigorous, transparent learning targets, with flexibility for how they demonstrate what they learn, based on their strengths and interests.

» Preparing students for an uncertain future: Robust supports from educators help students develop the skills they need to become self-advocates, critical thinkers and experienced collaborators, skillsets that will be necessary for supporting them in the future.

» Developing the whole child: In addition to academic growth, personalized learning emphasizes the importance of addressing each learner’s social, emotional, mental and physical needs.

» Empowering individuals to reach their potential: By helping students to develop individual ownership of learning, they are encouraged to explore their strengths and interests, and get the support they need to set and achieve personal education goals.

» Students are empowered to make important decisions about their learning experiences and how they will apply and demonstrate their knowledge and skills on a daily basis.

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.

Get more resources to help make personalized learning a reality at KnowledgeWorks.org.