PERSONALIZED, COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING



SUPPORTS FOR BUILDING A K-12 SYSTEM OF LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

i4PL

Leading Learner-Centered Education

Preface

The current state of education paints a picture that requires schools to change course on how we are educating our youth. National and state trends show our student population is more diverse than ever, and our academic achievement outcomes reflect that not all learners are successful in our current systems. If public schools are truly to ensure access to high-quality instruction and change outcomes for learners, a change in how we educate our youth must occur. Education must shift the focus so that students are at the center of their own learning. The focus needs to be on what our learners need to be successful, in our current classrooms and in their adult endeavors. This requires educators to think and plan differently for instruction so that students attain lifelong skills that can be applied outside of our educational systems.

Personalized, competency based learning (PCBL) opens access and equitable opportunities for students to be successful learners, not only in Wisconsin schools, but across the nation. PCBL moves students to the center, ensuring adults are planning for the unique needs of the students and engaging the students in this process. Not only is this more engaging for the students, but it enables them to become independent, lifelong learners; these skills are vital for future success.



Over the past fifteen years, i4PL, a division of CESA #1, has refined the structure in which personalized, competency based teaching and learning occurs. Our staff, the districts and states they serve, are deeply committed to growing capacity in our educational systems to make a difference in the lives of their students. I call on others to use this personalized, competency based learning approach to change the educational pathways so each and every learner finds success!

Sue L. Doyle
Executive Director

Sue Doyle

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Leading Learner-Centered Education

Introduction



Dr. Brenda Vogds
Director

In today's rapidly changing world, it's more important than ever for our learners to be equipped with the skills that will enable them to thrive. As we look ahead to the future, it's clear that the landscape of work, technology, and society will continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace. To help our students succeed in this dynamic environment our classroom pedagogy must evolve into one that provides learners with the key skills they will need to navigate the challenges and opportunities that await them.

Personalized, Competency-Based Learning (PCBL) opens the door for our learners to take control of their learning and co-create educational pathways in collaboration with educators, peers and mentors. Critical thinking and problem-solving, adaptability, collaboration, and digital literacy have become an important foundation for learning, and competency-based pathways will ensure that students attain the academic knowledge and skills to excel in this ever-changing landscape of the 21st century.

We believe that every student deserves equal opportunities to thrive, which is why educational equity is at the core of our approach to Personalized, Competency-Based Learning. Providing access to a high-quality education that intentionally fosters a culture of diversity, equity and inclusivity will empower all learners and prepare them for a successful future.

The goal of this guidebook is to provide information about the Why, What and How of a PCBL system. It was developed in collaboration with the Leading Learner-Centered Education Team at i4PL (formerly the Institute for Personalized Learning). If we can be of assistance to your or your team as you work towards Personalized, Competency-Based Learning, please reach out to contactus@institute4pl.org.

Dr Brenda Vogds



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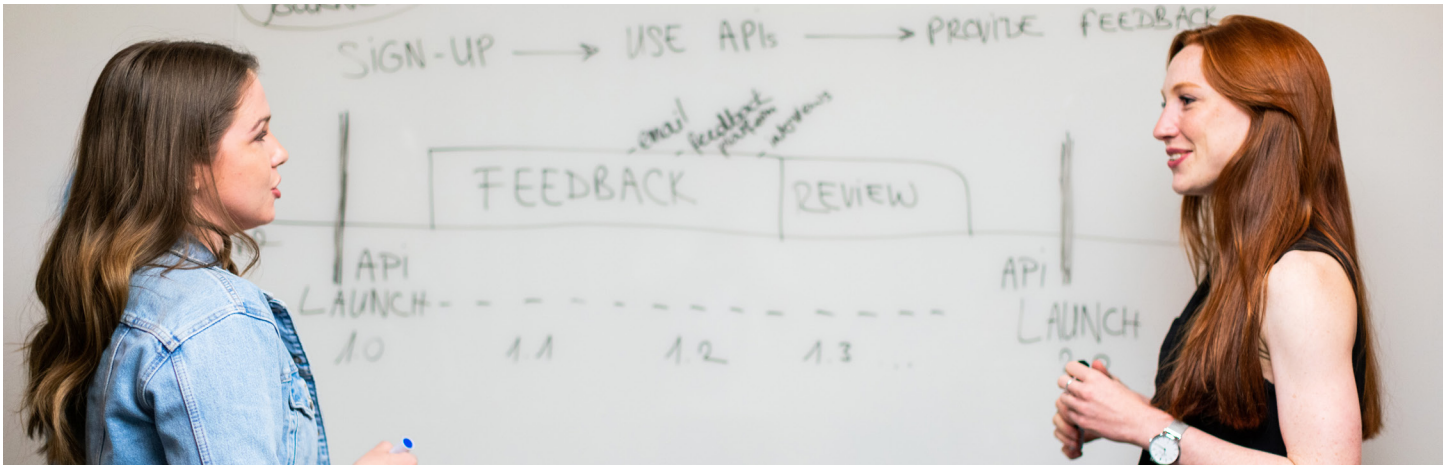
What is Personalized, Competency-Based Learning (PCBL)?

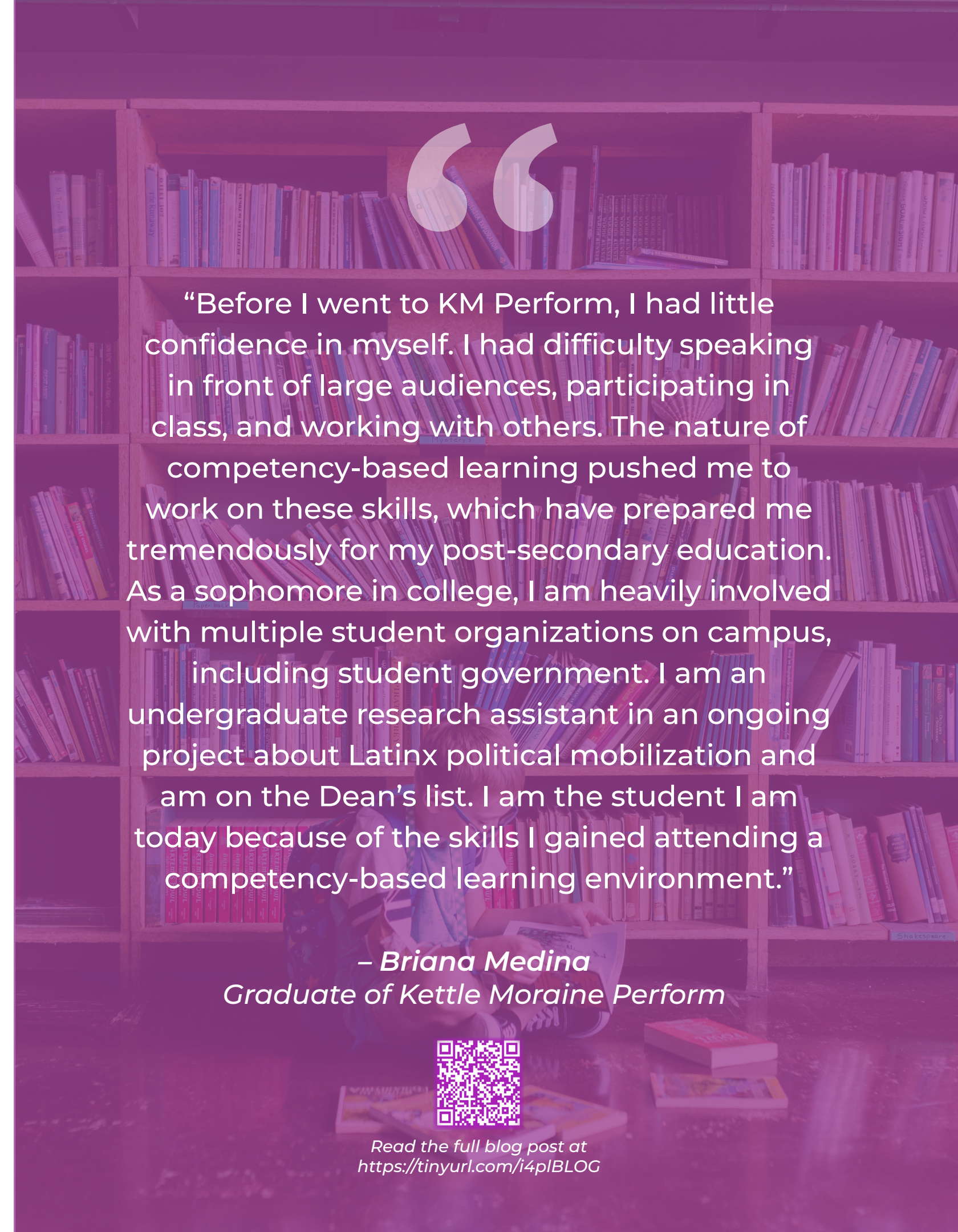
While i4PL refers to "Personalized, Competency-Based Learning," Aurora Institute's definition of Competency-Based Education offers a clear, concise frame of reference for this work, and their research provides a compelling case for an education system that is personalized and based on competency, no matter what you call it.

Competency-Based Education is a research-supported approach to learning that recognizes the diverse needs of students and provides tailored instruction aligned with their individual strengths, interests, and learning styles. Research from the Aurora Institute indicates that this approach allows students to progress at their own pace, delve deeper into areas of interest, and develop a deep understanding of the material, resulting in increased engagement, motivation, and achievement (Aurora Institute, 2018).

PCBL promotes equity in education by addressing the unique needs and backgrounds of each student. Research shows that this approach can help close achievement gaps and reduce disparities in educational outcomes, particularly for students from underserved communities (Aurora Institute, 2019).

Additional research from the Aurora Institute indicates that students who engage in Competency-Based Education are better prepared for the demands of the modern workforce, as they develop transferable skills that are relevant and applicable to real-world situations (Aurora Institute, 2020).





“Before I went to KM Perform, I had little confidence in myself. I had difficulty speaking in front of large audiences, participating in class, and working with others. The nature of competency-based learning pushed me to work on these skills, which have prepared me tremendously for my post-secondary education. As a sophomore in college, I am heavily involved with multiple student organizations on campus, including student government. I am an undergraduate research assistant in an ongoing project about Latinx political mobilization and am on the Dean’s list. I am the student I am today because of the skills I gained attending a competency-based learning environment.”

– Briana Medina
Graduate of Kettle Moraine Perform

Read the full blog post at
https://tinyurl.com/i4plBLOG



Definitions

Throughout this guidebook, a variety of words have multiple definitions and meanings. Included is a definition of each word as they are used by i4PL and their clients.

Competency-Based Education (CBE) is defined by the Aurora Institute (formerly iNACOL), as a systems model in which:

Students are empowered daily to make important decisions about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge and how they will demonstrate their learning. Assessment is a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence.

1. Assessment is a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence.
2. Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
3. Students' progress is based on evidence of mastery, not seat time.
4. Students learn actively using different pathways and varied pacing.
5. Strategies to ensure equity for all students are embedded in the culture, structure, and pedagogy of the schools and educational systems. Rigorous common expectations for learning (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) are explicit, transparent, measurable, and transferable (Sturgis & Casey, 2018).

A competency-based structure enables personalized learning to provide flexibility and support to ensure mastery of the highest standards possible. With a clear and calibrated understanding of proficiency, learning can be tailored to each student's strengths, needs, and interests and enable student voice and choice in what, how, when, and where they learn (Sturgis, 2018).

Competency-Based education is a system's model in which: (1) teaching and learning are designed to ensure students are becoming proficient and advancing based on demonstrated mastery, and (2) schools are organized to provide timely and differentiated support to ensure equity.

Assessment for Learning: Assessment that informs the learner where they are at in the learning process. Learner ownership in the evaluation is integral to learning. Assessment results help determine the next steps in instruction (See "Formative Assessment" and "Summative Assessment").

Evidence of Learning: Used to describe artifacts that learners use to show they have met a certain power standard/learning target.

Formative Assessment: Learning activities aligned to curricular standards that communicate the level to which learners demonstrate their progress toward mastery of a given standard/learning target. Formative assessments guide instruction and inform the teacher and learner of the next steps for learning.

High Achievement: High levels of expectations focused on academics and behaviors that support learners' lifelong success.

Learner Profile: A living document that is co-developed by the learner and the educator and tells the story of who the learner is. A culturally responsive learner profile includes information about a learner's background, interests, and experiences, in addition to academic, social, and emotional learning attributes. The purpose of a learner profile is to facilitate a common understanding between

the learner and the educator/mentor regarding all aspects of the learner and provide a foundation for building personalized educational experiences.

Lever: A means or device used to accomplish something that otherwise might not have been possible (Frontier and Rickabaugh, 2014).

Personalized Learning: Learning that is co-designed between educator and learner, customized academically to the learner, and considers the learner's background, experiences, culture, and prior knowledge.

Personalized, Learner-Centered Equitable Pedagogy: Intentional design of a learner-centered approach that uses both a learner profile and a portrait of a graduate to help define who the learner is and what they are ready to learn.

Profile of a Graduate: Defines what that community believes their graduates should know and be able to do upon graduation. The Profile of a Graduate focuses on both the academics and skills/dispositions of the learner. It allows both the learner and the district to define success measures that respond to the community's values.

Portrait of a Graduate: Detailed picture of an empowered learner using a strengths-based approach to accurately describe their attributes and successes as defined by a Profile of a Graduate, which is constructed with collaboration of all community stakeholder groups.

Standards: Concise, written descriptions of what students are expected to know and be able to do at specific stages throughout their education.

Standards-Based: Provides transparency, consistency, and alignment of curriculum, assessment and reporting, and instruction. Learning activities, measuring, and reporting of learning defines clear power standards/learning targets.

Standards-Based Instruction: Instruction that is transparent, consistent, and aligned with a set of standards for a specified curriculum as well as its related assessments, and reporting.

Student (Learner) Centered Pedagogy: Teaching through the lens of the learner. It follows a learning cycle in which the learner helps answer the question, "What do I need to know and be able to do?" and then co-designs the pathway to competency with the educator/mentor.

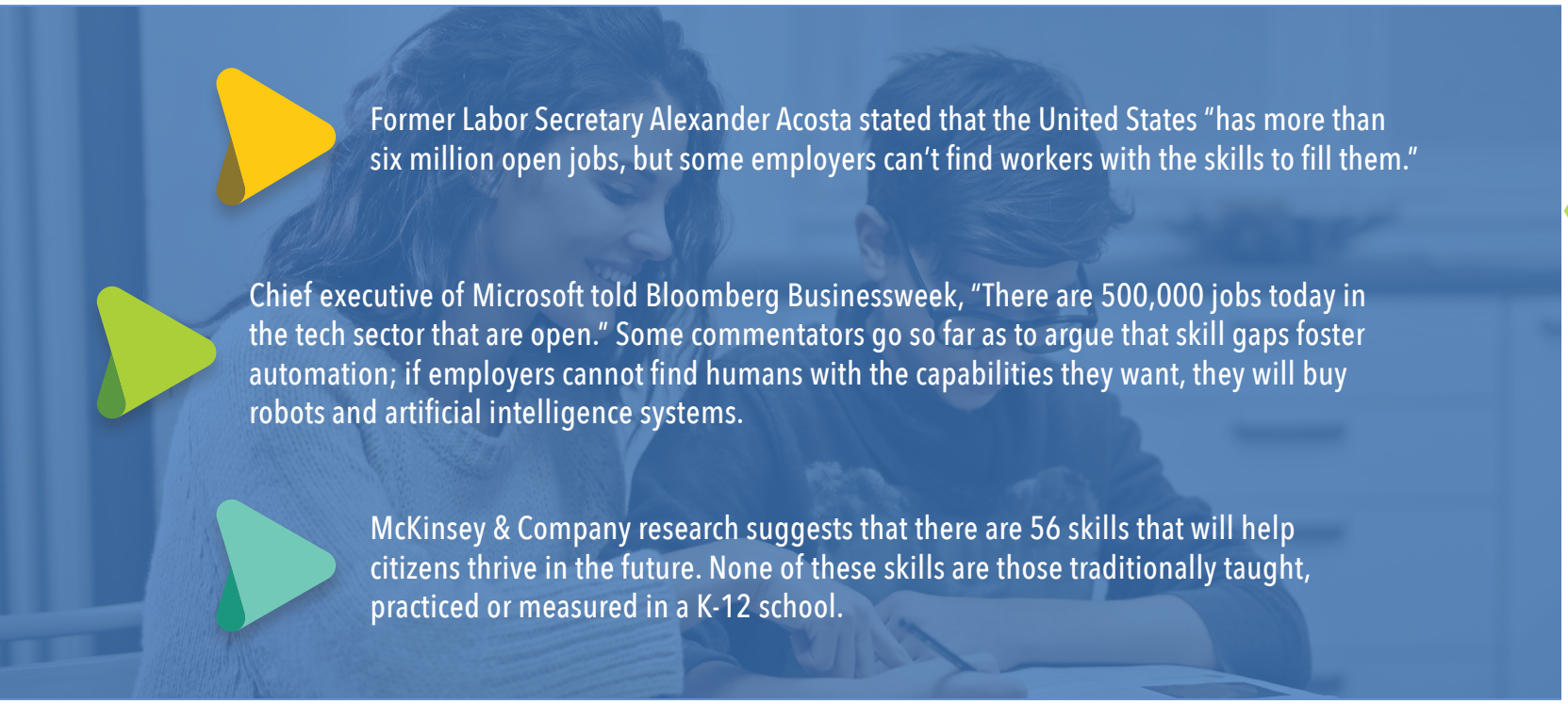
Summative Assessment: An assessment at the end of a unit or learning process in which a learner shows evidence that supports their level of understanding.

Teacher-Centered Pedagogy: Traditional teaching practices that begin with the teacher deciding what is next for them to "teach." A teacher-centered pedagogy follows an Instructional Cycle process in which the teacher asks, "What are the students going to learn?"

Vertical Alignment: Used to describe a process that courses/content strands go through to ensure that learning connects from level to level and that no gaps exist. Vertical alignment focuses on standards and appropriate levels of instruction, not curricular resources.

Why do this work?

Tackling the work of transforming our K-12 education system is challenging and undefined. Because of this, it is imperative that we are clear on our collective "why." Clarity of purpose and charge will grow support, accelerate progress and enhance the work in service to all learners. The need for change in Wisconsin and the nation is evident.



Former Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta stated that the United States "has more than six million open jobs, but some employers can't find workers with the skills to fill them."

Chief executive of Microsoft told Bloomberg Businessweek, "There are 500,000 jobs today in the tech sector that are open." Some commentators go so far as to argue that skill gaps foster automation; if employers cannot find humans with the capabilities they want, they will buy robots and artificial intelligence systems.

McKinsey & Company research suggests that there are 56 skills that will help citizens thrive in the future. None of these skills are those traditionally taught, practiced or measured in a K-12 school.

Proponents of Competency-Based Education argue that elementary and secondary schools in the United States focus on outdated instructional models that continue to ignore the skills needed to be successful in postsecondary environments and the world of work. Education should play a central role in enabling students to reach their goals as adults, whether for careers,college, civic participation, or relationships. Achieving those goals in the complex, modern world requires going beyond the academic knowledge that the traditional education system has emphasized and measured. Building academic knowledge is still essential, but success in most professional and personal pursuits demands an additional set of skills and dispositions such as self-direction, collaboration, communication, and a growth mindset.

As suggested above, the work of education transformation is challenging and support is needed. School districts across the country are embracing support in design, implementation and evaluation from organizations such as i4PL.

North Star

A Profile of a Graduate (PoG) serves as your organization's North Star. It is the single most powerful thing you can do within your system to redefine success. As a locally developed tool, the Profile of a Graduate is a shared vision identifying the knowledge, skills and dispositions of today's learners. Individual learner profiles and customized learning pathways align with the competency-based academic and essential skills identified in the Profile of a Graduate. A PoG has the power to reinvigorate and re-engage all stakeholders and provide an intentional structure to support the development of personalized, competency-based learning experiences and equitable access for all learners in order to prepare them to be lifelong learners and contributors.





Impacts of your North Star:

- Leads with the LEARNER in mind to redefine success.
- Unifies the community's VISION and creates alignment within your system.
- Identifies knowledge, skills and dispositions of today's learner.
- Provides an intentional structure that supports equitable access to high-quality learning experiences.
- Promotes learner agency and prepares students to be lifelong learners and contributors to society.
- Aligns your Career and Technical Education/Academic and Career Planning.

Reflective Questions to Consider:

- What hopes, dreams, and aspirations do you and your stakeholders have for your learners?
- What are the skills and dispositions that your learners need for success in our rapidly changing, global economy?
- What are the implications for your educators and the learning experiences you provide in your classrooms?
- How would the development of high quality learning experiences, and equitable access to those experiences, prepare your learners for their future?

Examples:

The following pages include Profile of a Graduate examples. You can also visit the i4PL website or scan the QR code on this page to view examples.

i4pl.link/WI-PoG-Examples

Examples



CONTINUOUS LEARNER

- Takes ownership of learning, continuously pursuing and demonstrating knowledge and skills throughout life
- Understands how to apply learning to new situations and challenges
- Explores areas of interest for academic, career and personal success

COMMUNICATOR

- Communicates effectively in multiple ways - verbal, written, electronic and visual
- Shows purpose and thoughtfulness in communication
- Remains open to communicating with a variety of people, familiar and unfamiliar

COLLABORATOR

- Actively listens, empathizes and contributes thoughtful, meaningful ideas that support common goals
- Understands the importance of roles and responsibilities within a collaborative process/ organization, and has the ability to lead formally and informally while collaborating
- Is flexible, open minded, confident and adaptable when working with and receiving feedback from others

CREATIVE & CRITICAL THINKER

- Reflects on past learning and experiences when faced with new situations and challenges
- Questions, reasons and weighs evidence to reach conclusions
- Innovates to solve problems

ENGAGED CITIZEN

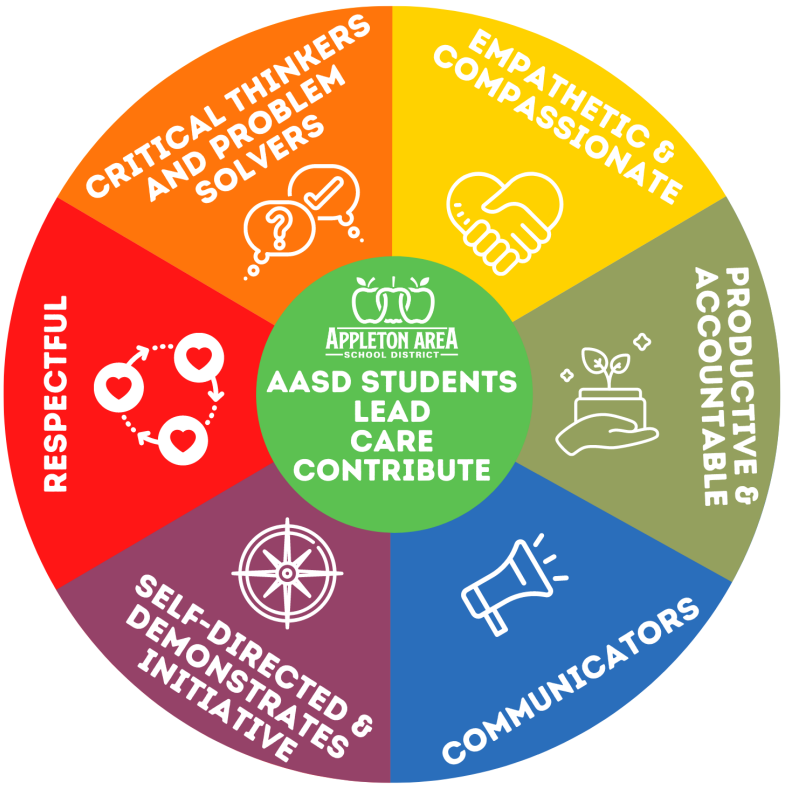
- Demonstrates integrity and leadership through positively influencing outcomes
- Acknowledges, understands, interacts with and respects diverse individuals, perspectives and cultures
- Applies individual talents to serve others in the local and global community
- Understands how to make ethical, moral and financially responsible decisions

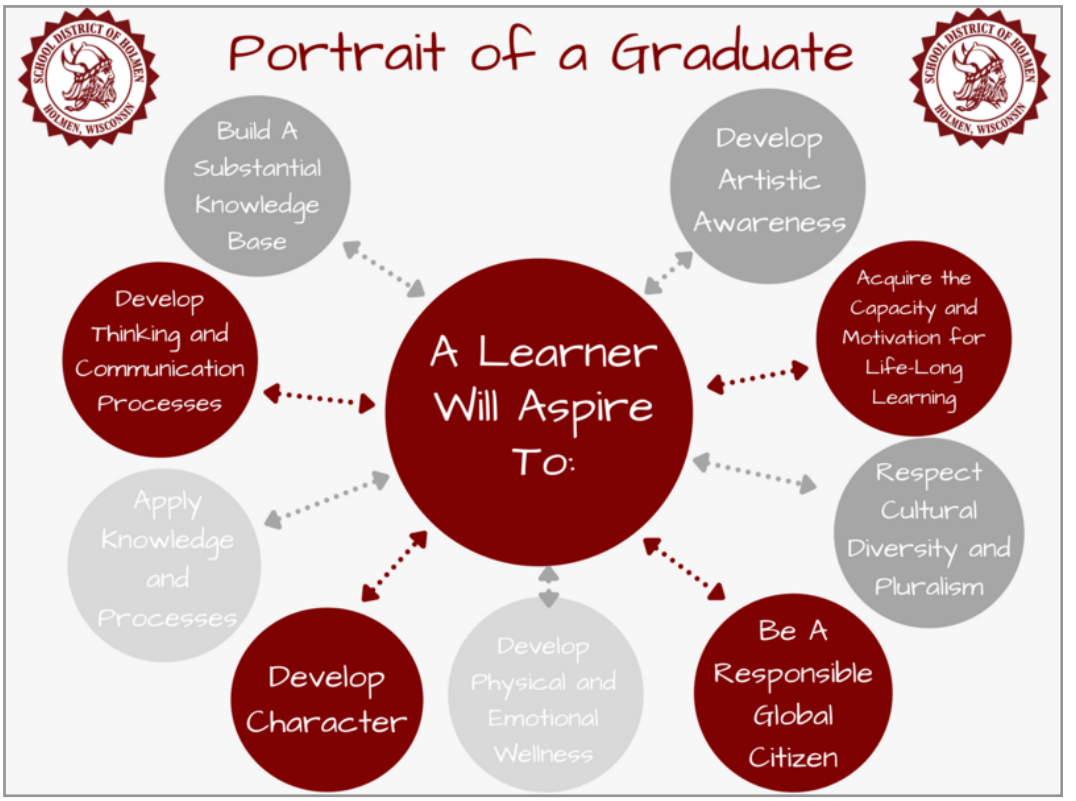
SELF-DIRECTED & RESILIENT INDIVIDUAL

- Maintains a positive work ethic and strives for self-improvement
- Understands how to manage time and priorities
- Sets short- and long-term goals for success
- Overcomes adversity through persistence, perseverance, self-advocacy and a growth mindset
- Reflects on one's decisions and actions, remaining flexible and open to new ideas


PEWAUKEE SCHOOL DISTRICT
GRADUATE PROFILE
Pewaukee School District is dedicated to having all students graduate with the skills required to...
CONTRIBUTE
Actively participate in the enhancement of society:
{Citizenship} {Service} {Global Awareness}
CREATE
Develop and implement solutions to unique challenges:
{Innovation} {Problem Solving} {Adaptability}
COMPETE
Strive to maximize performance by applying acquired information and skills:
{Knowledge} {Critical Thinking} {Literacy}
CONNECT
Respectfully working with others in meaningful and productive ways:
{Collaboration} {Communication} {Cultural Responsiveness}
COMMIT
Internal drive and desire required to overcome obstacles and maximize talents:
{Personal Responsibility} {Resilience} {Initiative} {Perseverance}
CARE
Ability to manage one's health and support the well-being of others
{Wellness} {Empathy} {Self-Awareness} {Reflection}
PEWAUKEE SCHOOL DISTRICT
OPENING THE DOOR TO EACH CHILD'S FUTURE

Examples


CRITICAL THINKERS AND PROBLEM SOLVERS
EMPATHETIC & COMPASSIONATE
PRODUCTIVE & ACCOUNTABLE
COMMUNICATORS
SELF-DIRECTED & DEMONSTRATES INITIATIVE
RESPECTFUL
APPLETON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
AASD STUDENTS LEAD CARE CONTRIBUTE


Portrait of a Graduate
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HOLMEN HOLMEN, WISCONSIN
A Learner Will Aspire To:
Build A Substantial Knowledge Base
Develop Artistic Awareness
Develop Thinking and Communication Processes
Acquire the Capacity and Motivation for Life-Long Learning
Apply Knowledge and Processes
Respect Cultural Diversity and Pluralism
Develop Character
Develop Physical and Emotional Wellness
Be A Responsible Global Citizen

BELOIT MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE



CAREER, COLLEGE, AND COMMUNITY READY

Beloit Memorial High School Graduates are Career, College, and Community Ready!

The Beloit Memorial High School Academies create an environment of learning and growth that prepare and inspire each student to succeed in life and contribute to an ever-changing world.

Beloit Memorial High School Knights are:

FEARLESS LEARNERS — Enthusiastic, self-motivated, diligent, and courageous. Pursues knowledge and new experiences with a passion. Embraces change, seeks collaboration, and creates inclusive and diverse opportunities for themselves and others. Engages in job shadowing, internships, hands-on and real-life experiences.

AMBITIOUS INNOVATORS — Versatile, creative, trailblazer, and problem solver. Action-oriented, opportunity-focused and able to initiate and bring forward big ideas as they collaborate with others. Ability to take risks and calculate the rewards of decision-making.

GLOBAL CONTRIBUTORS — Impactful, knowledgeable, kind, and supportive. Able to think beyond now. An entrepreneurial spirit that encompasses volunteerism, advocacy, servant leadership, and the ability to engage in open and respectful dialogue. Supports cultural inclusivity and diversity with an understanding of the importance of everyone's voice and representation.

RESILIENT LEADERS — Persistent, goal-driven, empathetic, and confident. Maintains a positive attitude and a strong sense of optimism in overcoming challenges. Elevates peers by building trust and leading by example. Desires to intertwine academic knowledge with life experiences to cultivate growth and development for themselves and others.

CRITICAL THINKERS — Independent, thoughtful, open-minded, and analytical. Draws upon academic and educational experiences for self-reflection, analysis, and creating connections to problem-solve. Seeks higher level thinking and pathway decision-making to advance discussions and outcomes.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS — Purposeful, intentional, concise, and articulate. Strong and engaging written, verbal, and listening skills. Embraces and communicates with awareness and knowledge of cultural differences. Confident and competent in social skills and networking capabilities.

Freshman Academy

Business, Art, Communication, Hospitality (BACH)

Health, Human, and Educational Services (HHES)

Public Service, Automotive, Construction, Manufacturing, Engineering, and Science (PACMES)

Our Model

The Honeycomb model reflects what we know about learning as an autonomous process. It starts with a deep understanding of the learner and their skills, interests and goals, and expands to include all education stakeholders as they build a personalized, competency-based pathway to becoming a lifelong empowered learner.

ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION

The heart of our model is composed of 4 key elements that place the learner at the center and focus on the development of empowered learners: Learner Profile, Learner Agency, Competency-Based Progress and Customized Learning Pathways. These core elements guide the development of an **Empowered Learner** at the center and focuses on the aspirational graduate of our educational systems.

LEARNING & TEACHING

These 14 elements represent instructional practices that create and support opportunities for the model's core elements. This layer was intentionally designed with the greatest number of elements, as each practice provides a new entry point for starting or continuing the work. Classroom educators have the greatest level of autonomy and potential impact in this layer of the Honeycomb.

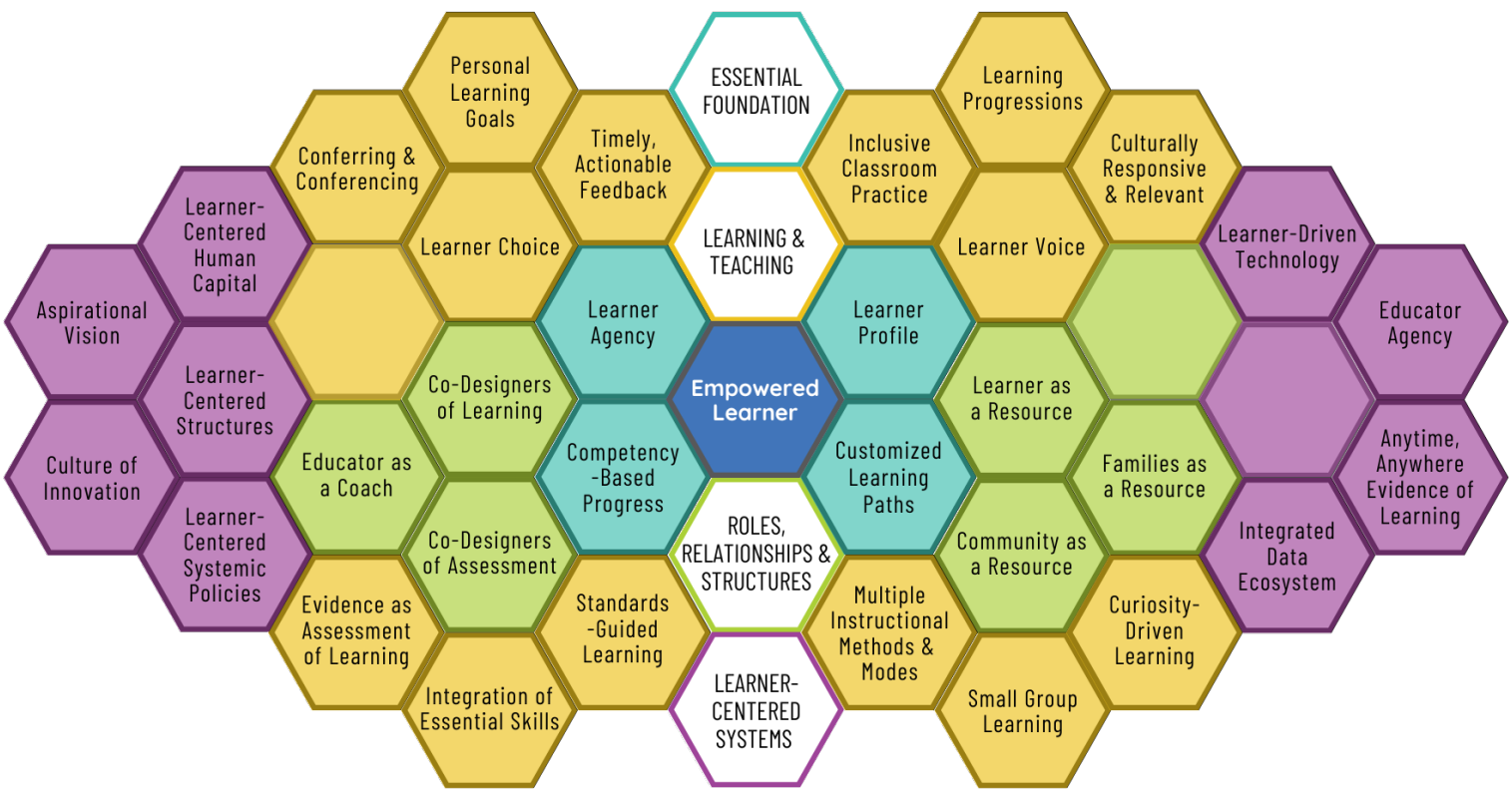
ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS & STRUCTURES

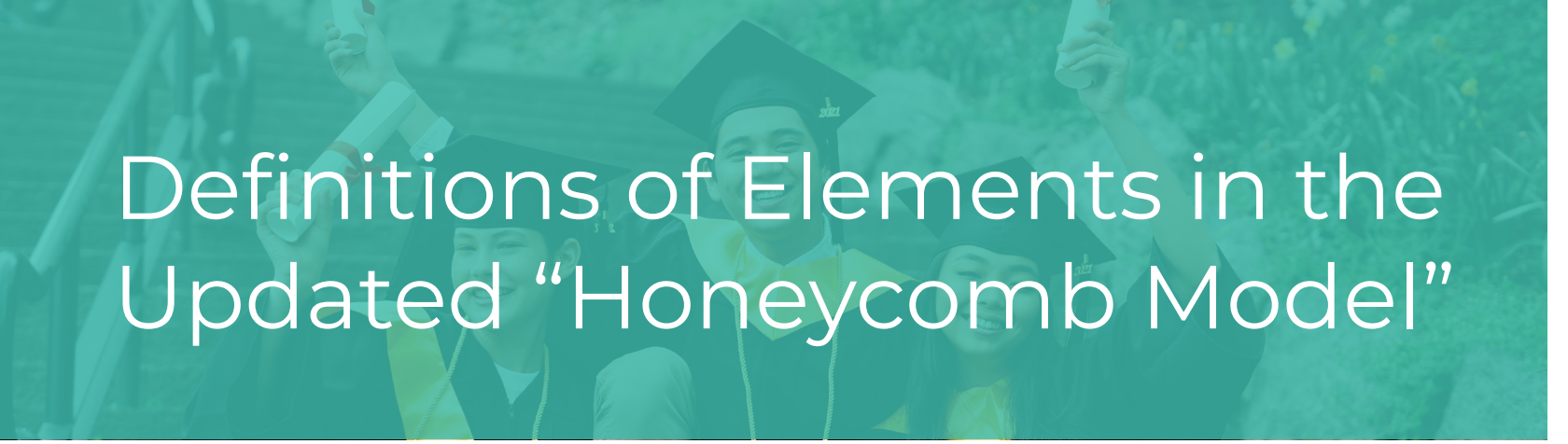
The 6 elements in this layer identify the roles that learners, educators, and community members play in a personalized, competency-based education system. They describe healthy relationships between stakeholders that catalyze learner growth and achievement. They also address structures that support everyone in their roles and enable learning relationships to flourish. The elements in this layer offer opportunities for coaches, assistant principals, specialists and other educator support staff to impact the learning experience.

LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

These 9 leadership-focused elements are designed to guide districts in creating the conditions necessary for a learner-centered environment to thrive. The modular structure of this layer addresses key shifts across all areas of the organization that act as levers for transformation with a common thread of building and supporting learner and educator agency. Elements of the i4PL Leading Learner-Centered Education model are integrated into this area of the Honeycomb. Typically, this is where administrators, school boards, and government representatives can have the greatest level of impact.




ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION
Personal Learning Goals
Conferring & Conferencing
Timely, Actionable Feedback
Learner Choice
Learner-Centered Human Capital
Aspirational Vision
Learner-Centered Structures
Culture of Innovation
Learner-Centered Systemic Policies
LEARNING & TEACHING
Learner Agency
Co-Designers of Learning
Educator as a Coach
Co-Designers of Assessment
Evidence as Assessment of Learning
Integration of Essential Skills
Empowered Learner
Learner Profile
Competency -Based Progress
Customized Learning Paths
ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS & STRUCTURES
Standards -Guided Learning
Multiple Instructional Methods & Modes
LEARNER-CENTERED SYSTEMS
Learning Progressions
Inclusive Classroom Practice
Culturally Responsive & Relevant
Learner Voice
Learner as a Resource
Families as a Resource
Community as a Resource
Curiosity-Driven Learning
Small Group Learning
Learner-Driven Technology
Educator Agency
Anytime, Anywhere Evidence of Learning
Integrated Data Ecosystem



Definitions of Elements in the Updated "Honeycomb Model"

EMPOWERED LEARNER

Learners are self-aware of their own knowledge, skills and dispositions and can advocate for growth in each area in order to reach their goals.

ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION

Learner Profiles: Comprehensive, data-rich learner profiles convey a deep understanding of the learner and are used to plan a customized learning path and instructional strategies. They are dynamic, real-time, learner-owned and managed.

Customized Learning Paths: Learners are actively involved in what they learn, how they learn it, and how they demonstrate understanding. The unique path is based on the learner's individual readiness, strengths, needs and goals.

Competency-Based Progress: Learner progress and advancement is based on demonstrated competency in pre-defined, agreed-upon learning targets aligned to standards.

Learner Agency: Learners take on an active role in the learning process. They have power and ownership over their learning path and the results of their choices.

LEARNING & TEACHING

Conferring & Conferencing: Conferring and conferencing for the purpose of goal reflection, progress monitoring, and planning next steps in learning. This can occur with educators, peers or other experts.

Culturally Responsive & Relevant: Learners are provided opportunities to engage with content through various cultural lenses and perspectives, and draw from their own cultural background to build their learning.

Curiosity-Driven Learning: Learners follow interests and passions that move beyond the accumulation of content knowledge and towards deep exploration of topics driven by curiosity, personal relevance, and wonder.

Evidence as Assessment of Learning: Evidence of learning is a balanced assessment system used throughout the learning process through varied means such as performance, application, demonstration, and student interaction.

Inclusive Classroom Practice: Promote a safe and welcoming environment where all learners have the opportunity to be included in the general education classroom, regardless of cognitive or academic level and where individual differences are valued, embraced, and evident.

Integration of Essential Skills: Learners engaging in daily opportunities to practice and grow in skills and dispositions needed to be successful in life and work.

Learner Choice: Learners make intentional and purposeful choices about what they learn, how they learn it, and/or how their learning is demonstrated.

Learner Voice: Learners can freely ask questions and provide ideas/input that drives what they learn, how they learn, and/or how they demonstrate their learning.

Learning Progressions: Progressions outline competencies across a skill, concept or standard. They provide a roadmap to support flexibility in pace and learner agency.

Multiple Instructional Methods & Modes: Instruction is offered using a variety of methods and modes in response to learner profiles.

Personal Learning Goals: Learners and educators co-develop purposeful, personalized goals to provide benchmarks and add focus, clarity, and commitment to learning.

Small Group Learning: A learning configuration that exists in order to provide targeted instruction based on readiness, needs and interests of learners.

Standards-Guided Learning: Learners understand and articulate how proficiencies/ competencies align to standards and drive their learning experiences.

Timely, Actionable Feedback: Frequent and actionable feedback from educators, peers and/or other experts that empowers the learner to execute next steps on their learning progression.

ROLES, RELATIONSHIPS & STRUCTURES

Co-Designers of Assessment: Learners and educators collaborate to determine evidence of learning. Learners play an active role in the understanding, planning, and demonstration of learning.

Co-Designers of Learning: Learners and educators collaborate to design learning experiences based on the learner's academic and/or skill-based readiness.

Community as a Resource: Stakeholders collaborate to fully leverage external resources and expertise to maximize the learning experience for all.

Educator as a Coach: Educators are guides as they coach alongside learners to achieve shared goals. Coaches provide resources and support flexibly to ensure learner success.

Families as a Resource: Family input is reflected in the school design and learner experience. Collaboration between families and educators supports learners in both school and home learning environments.

Learner as a Resource: Learners are valued partners and a resource for their own learning and the learning of others. Learning is driven based on readiness, strengths, needs, and interests.

LEARNER-CENTERED SYSTEMS

Anytime, Anywhere Evidence of Learning: Recognizing growth in skills and knowledge through evidence collected within and beyond the school walls. The system honors learning that occurs across all aspects of a learner's life.

Aspirational Vision: A co-created illustration that describes a future to which the organization aspires.

Culture of Innovation: Leaders nurture a culture where risk is encouraged, agency is rampant, expectations are high, and iteration is continuous.

Educator Agency: Teachers have the flexibility to find solutions to challenges and make choices that improve their practice. Educator voice, autonomy, and growth is supported by systems of evaluation, professional development, and teaming.

Integrated Data Ecosystem: Data management systems are transparent, real-time and easily accessible to all stakeholders to support each learner's progress and goals.

Learner-Centered Human Capital: System design that fosters agency, elevates creativity and decision-making, and inspires stakeholders to make the aspirational vision a reality.

Learner-Centered Structures: Organizational structures are designed to support learners through flexibility in use of time, pace of advancement, and use of physical spaces.

Learner-Centered Systemic Policies: Leaders enact or revise local policy to remove barriers and support the depth and sustainability of a learner-centered system. Leaders challenge state and national policies that are not aligned to the aspirational vision and advocate for policies that are aligned.



How do I do this?

Wisconsin state legislatures and the Department of Public Instruction both recognize that flexibility in regulations are beneficial as districts work to transform to a personalized, competency-based system. In 2017, a statewide work group published *Fostering Innovation in Wisconsin Schools* as a guide to understanding the flexibility available to all districts in the state. The guide is valuable in understanding where flexibility already exists, and to provide guidance on decision making within your system.

Below are a few examples of transformational designs that are supported by the flexibility granted (many more exist within the publication):

Competency-Based

- A project-based learning program that allows a student to demonstrate a range of competencies in various content areas that fulfill the graduation requirement through an in-depth, personalized project.
- A high school student awarded English credit after review of a portfolio of work the student completed in a summer college course.
- A high school student earns a science credit for achieving a sufficient score on the comprehensive final exam of the corresponding district science course.
- A school board that has adopted a resolution, policies, and procedures for awarding credits based on demonstration of proficiencies requests a DPI waiver allowing it to award students more than one-half of their graduation requirement credits through demonstration of proficiency.
- The school board of a district with standards-based grading requests a DPI waiver allowing it to grant high school diplomas to students who have not met the credit requirements under s. 118.33 but instead have met benchmark standards that are comparable to or exceed what would occur in earning the credits.

Personalized for...

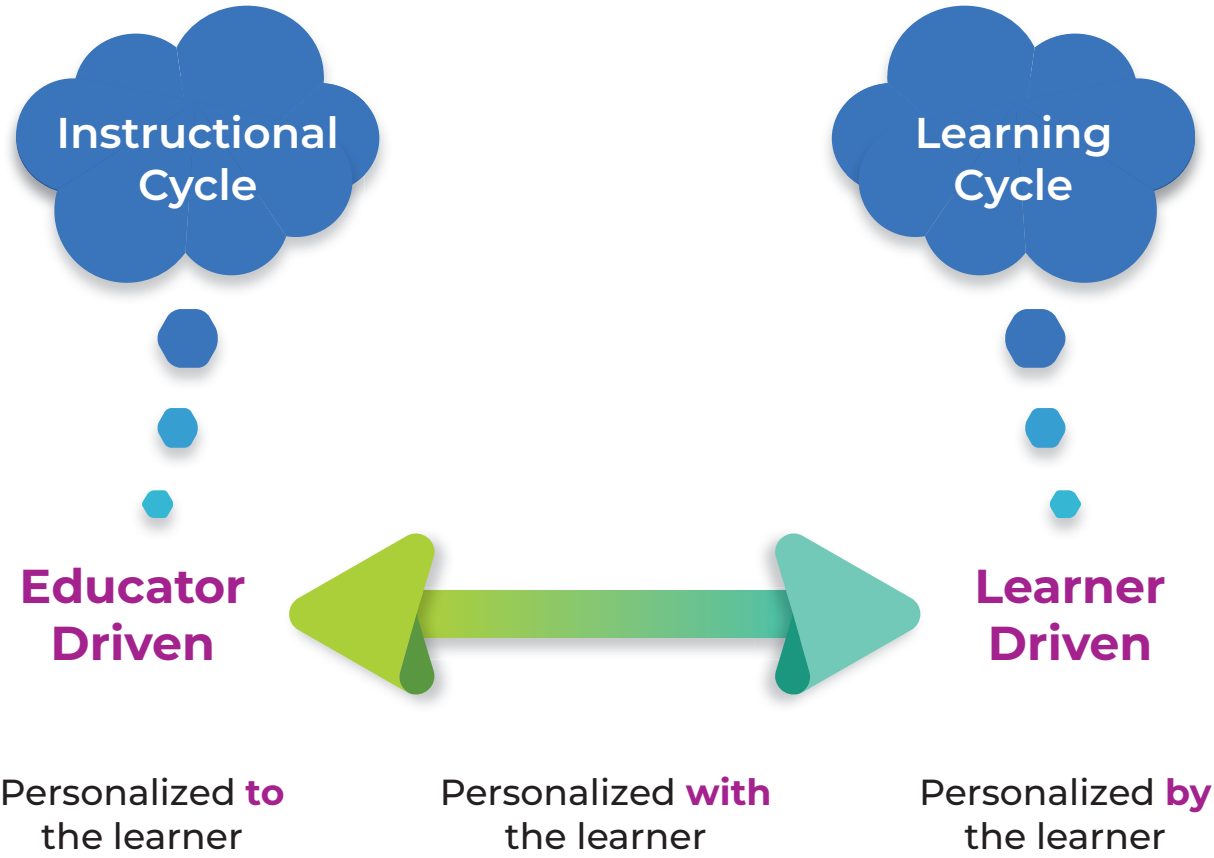
- A district-designed career academy with most or all core academic instruction delivered in an integrated and applied manner.
- A system that allows students to develop and demonstrate competencies through a variety of activities such as, but not limited to, online courses, service learning, work-based learning, independent projects, and dual credit classes.
- A school board granting credit for an employment activity or other academic-related activity that is equivalent to a daily high school course.

Educator Practice & Effectiveness

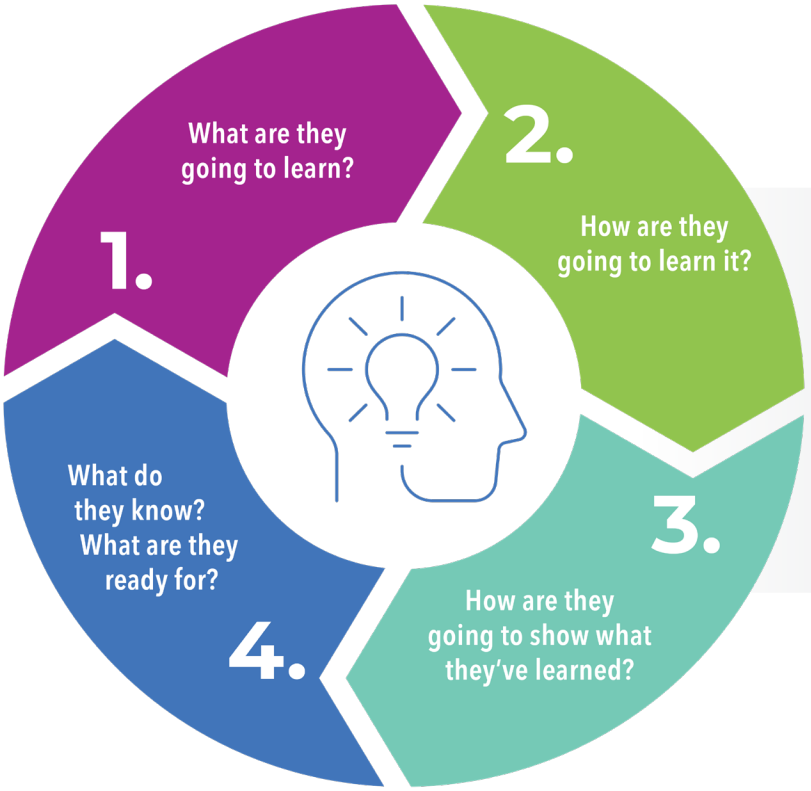
Wisconsin's Educator Effectiveness (EE) System allows educators to experience a personal assessment of practice on an annual basis. In order to support the continuous improvement of Wisconsin's students, the EE model is structured in a manner that supports each individual educator as they pursue "guided, individualized, self-determined professional growth and development" (WI DPI, 2022). Thus, the basic tenets of Wisconsin's EE model are aligned with a personalized, competency-based environment.

As a participant in the EE system, Wisconsin's educators have the opportunity to reflect on their practice and determine where they are on the continuum from Instruction Cycle to Learning Cycle (Rickabaugh, 2016), by asking themselves the following questions:

- Where am I now?
- What am I ready for?
- What am I going to learn?
- How am I going to learn it?
- How am I going to show what I've learned?



Instructional Cycle



Within the Instructional Paradigm, the educator plans the lesson, and then implements with their learners.

Learning Cycle

Within the Learning Paradigm, learners take on an active role. The cycle begins with learners thinking about their own readiness levels. They then co-answer the questions to determine what they will learn, how they will learn it, and how they will demonstrate their understanding.



Adult Learning Cycle



Within the Learning Paradigm, everyone is thought of as a learner. We must also consider ways that professional learning is becoming personalized for our adult learners. Adult learners should be thinking about their own readiness levels and co-designing their learning experiences.

After reflection, educators identify areas for growth or areas of strength, helping them to determine a focus for the year, and create an educator effectiveness plan. The plan includes both a Student Learning Objective (SLO) and Professional Practice Goal (PPG). Both of these components serve as tangible outcomes after self-reflection. The EE system also strongly supports the use of an instructional coach to support educators as they work towards their goals.

This framework strongly mirrors many practices young learners engage in through personalized, competency-based learning, including self-reflection and self-assessment, goal setting, self-monitoring, co-designing learning experiences, and the creation of a learner profile.

As educators look to make the shift to personalized, competency-based learning in their environment, they can explore a set of "Look Fors" developed by i4PL (see pages 21-22) as a foundation for the work. Several components in the Educator Effectiveness Self-Review of Teacher Professional Growth Portfolio directly correlate with these Look Fors, including:

1e: Designing Coherent Instruction
1f: Designing Student Assessments
2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning
2c: Managing Classroom Procedures
2e: Organizing Physical Space
3a: Communicating with Students
3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
3c: Engaging Students in Learning
3d: Using Assessment in Instruction
3e: Demonstrating Flexibility & Responsiveness

i4PL Look Fors



Learner Choice: Whenever practical, learners are given options regarding the ways in which they will engage in learning. It may be the approach to completing a task, how learning will be displayed or with whom learners will work, but choices are a part of the environment. The focus remains on clear, vigorous standards, but the paths learners will take to meet these standards include learners as co-designers.

Purposeful Learning: When visitors speak with learners in a Learner-Centered environment they are likely to hear them describe not just what they are learning, but how it addresses key competencies or standards, how the learning serves a purpose and how they can use it beyond the classroom.

Ownership of Learning: Learners in a Learner-Centered environment typically see their learning as something that has value to them. They also see the work they do as for themselves rather than to comply with the demands of adults.

Learner Efficacy: Learner-Centered environments are designed to help learners make the connection that good choices, effective strategies, persistence, and good use of resources determine their learning success.



Commitment Focused: While legacy learning environments typically depend on learner compliance to assure order and completion of assigned work, Learner-Centered environments focus on stimulating and nurturing commitment to learning as the key driver for learning engagement and growth. Rather than how many problems to solve or how long an assignment should be, learner questions in a Learner-Centered environment are more likely to focus on understanding and mastery as drivers for learning effort.

Independence: Learner-Centered environments are organized on the premise that learners are and will be their own best teachers. The work of educators is to build with learners their skills, knowledge and learning capacity to prepare them to succeed without external structures and direction to support their learning. In a Learner-Centered environment, the organization of learning tasks and the construction of paths to meet challenging standards actively involve the learner. Increasingly, learners are given driving choices and crucial voice in and responsibility for their learning.

Flexible Pace: Learner-Centered environments break the "iron clad" connection between time and learning. Learners are able to move at the pace that works best for them. The focus is on quality learning, not the calendar.

Tech Supported: Also contrary to the assumptions of many, personalized learning is not technology driven. Rather, technology is employed thoughtfully and strategically to support learning in the most effective and appropriate ways possible from the perspective of the learner. Learner-Centered environments can be enhanced and made more efficient and learning options can be expanded with technology, but at the core, it is the shift in the roles of learners and educators and the employment of key learning and teaching processes that make the difference.

Collaboration: Contrary to the perceptions of some, Learner-Centered is not and should not be isolated learning. While some learning tasks and work are best accomplished as learners are working alone, collaborative learning plays a key role in the environment. The question is not "either/or," but what is the best fit for the learner and the learning task. Visitors to Learner-Centered environments are likely to see a variety of learning approaches: learners working alone, in pairs, small groups and even in large gatherings in response to the learning challenges at hand.

Learner Voice: The perspectives, opinions and preferences of learners are invited, respected and considered in a Learner-Centered environment. While learner preferences may not always prevail, they are seriously considered and implemented where practical.

Flexible Space: Environments that support Learner-Centered work typically are not organized into rows of desks and assigned seats. Learners may be clustered around the room, learning in a variety of positions from sitting at tables, on the floor with other learners, or comfortably on a cushion or beanbag chair. Learners are encouraged to find the position and location where they learn best without distracting others from learning. For more mature students learning likely is expanded beyond the classroom. They may be engaged in digital learning, a blended learning experience or even out in the community learning first-hand in areas of interest and in an authentic manner.

Learner as a Resource: Counter to the traditional view of teaching and learning where learners are seen as receptacles to be filled, in a Learner-Centered environment learners are seen as key resources to build their own learning and support the learning of other students. Learners are encouraged to make connections with prior learning, employ effective learning strategies, investigate and inquire, and bring new ideas and insights to their learning in addition to the instructional strategies and skills offered by educators.

Resources

Wisconsin DPI Innovation
https://dpi.wi.gov/cal/innovation

Competency-Based Starter Packs from Competency Works:
https://aurora-institute.org/cw_post/cbe-starter-pack-1-students-are-empowered-daily/

Measuring student progress and teachers' assessment of student knowledge in a competency-based education system: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/central/pdf/REL_2017238.pdf

i4PL: Leading Learning-Centered Education
www.institute4pl.org





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