COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING
STATE POLICY CHECKLIST

For more information, see the full report “The Shift from Cohorts to Competency,” available at:
State Policy that Supports Competency-Based Learning

Almost all of our state education policies are time based. We still depend on the centuries old practice of grouping students by birthday. We start with how many days students need to be in school. We define the instructional hours every student is to receive. We determine credits by seat time. Our challenge is to loosen our minds and deploy our creativity towards establishing policies that focus on student learning.

The following checklist offers state policy leaders a set of recommendations designed to inspire state policy environments in which competency-based learning can grow and thrive.

Upgrade Graduation and Higher Education Policies
- Every state should have clear proficiency-based diplomas that ensure students are college and career ready.
- Students should be able to access courses in higher education while still in high school.
- Admission requirements to higher education without remediation need to be transparent, and mechanisms should be in place to allow students to determine if they are on track to meet the requirements.
- Accountability systems should reinforce a pace that reflects a four year graduation expectation while providing incentives for acceleration and credit for students needing extended time for achieving readiness.
- Higher education and scholarship programs should upgrade policies to no longer depend on the time based GPA.

Grading and Assessment
- States should encourage or incentivize local districts to update their grading policies to ensure students have multiple opportunities to take summative assessments and that grades are based on demonstrated competency.
- State policy should allow students to take benchmark and summative assessments on-demand or at multiple points throughout the year.

Expanding Personalization and Accelerating Pacing
- States or groups of districts should develop competencies and progressions for schools to voluntarily adopt or use.
- States should encourage schools to assess new students and use learning progressions to determine appropriate, differentiated supports.
- States should allow students to take online classes full time or part time by the individual course.
- States should require online courses to be based on demonstrated competency.
- States should allow rolling, year-round enrollment in courses and programs.
Increased Flexibility in Operations
• States should provide schools the flexibility needed to manage operations and scheduling and enhance their ability to respond to students.
• Teacher certification requirements should be revised so that schools have the capacity to flexibly instruct students with substantially lower- or higher-level skills than their specific grade levels.

Quality Control, Continuous Improvement, and Accountability
• States should hold school and individual providers accountable for student achievement and growth.
• States should evaluate the quality of content and courses predominantly based on student learning outcomes.
• States should ensure that local data systems and related applications are updated and robust enough to inform longitudinal management decisions, accountability, and instruction.