

Competency-Based Learning

A Guide for Middle School Parents

SAU 24 - Five Schools, Four Districts, One Community
One community ensuring learning at high levels for all students.



In 2017-2018, the middle school students in SAU 24 will have their learning communicated through a competency-based reporting system as an important step on our journey to competency-based learning. As many of you have experienced at the elementary level, we have been reporting out by standards for a number of years. This was an effort to more clearly communicate what students know and can do. The shift to competencies is an extension of the standards-based approach.

In competency-based learning, students show that they can apply concepts, knowledge and skills. Some students may demonstrate learning quickly, while others have to spend more time to show that they fully understand the material. We recognize that there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to learning. Competency-based reporting changes what information parents have about their child's progress. It also may shift the teacher-student relationship – challenging students to become more independent, self-motivated learners, and requiring that we become even more responsive to the individual needs our students have.

What are the important ideas in a competency-based learning environment?

- *Students need to show that they can apply content, skills and knowledge.*
- *Learning doesn't always happen in a straight line –it can look different for each student.*
- *Perseverance is an attribute of success that should be supported and rewarded.*
- *Competence, not compliance should be recognized.*
- *Rigor means students are challenged, but not frustrated to the point of giving up.*
- *When students exhibit gaps in performance, we need to support them with additional resources.*

What does this mean for my child?

There may actually be little change to what your child experiences in the classroom each day. The content of the courses remains the same. Teachers will still be teaching lessons. Students will still be doing classwork and homework. There will still be quizzes, projects and tests.

What you might notice is:

- An increased focus on application of skills and content.
- Additional discussion about Habits of Learning.

Habits of Learning

We all recognize that the habits that students develop have a tremendous impact on academic performance. As part of the shift to a competency-based learning environment, we will be communicating how students are doing in these areas. When students understand that it's never too late to learn, they are willing to take risks to push themselves and know that they can recover from the mistakes that they make during the learning process.

What information about my child's learning will I be getting from my child's teacher?

- Does my child know the material AND can he/she apply it to a new situation?
- Do my child's work habits and behaviors support his/her learning?

How will my child's learning be assessed?

Throughout the year your child's teacher will be collecting evidence about where your child is at on a particular goals. Students will continue to work until they have demonstrated mastery of competencies. Teachers will expect that your child will review and relearn material and then reassess to show what they know and can do.

The three Rs for Reassessment:

Review, Relearn, Reassess

- **Review:** Students must review formative activities and assessments related to the learning targets and complete any that are missing or incomplete to prepare for reassessment.
- **Relearn:** Students must complete an additional learning activity designed to help them learn course material and meet the targets.
- **Reassess:** Students will complete all or a portion of a summative performance assessment to remediate the learning target.

Students who need to reassess will work with the teacher to complete a reassessment plan (*see teacher's reassessment process*) that allows for completion of the reassessment process within two weeks of the return of an assessment to the student. Students who reassess a learning target will have the potential to earn full credit for that assessment/competency.

How will student learning be reported?

Students and parents have ongoing access to progress through the PowerSchool portal. We will be reporting progress on Habits of Learning and competencies at the trimester points. All reports before the end of the academic year are considered “in progress.” For trimester one and two, the mark given to your child indicates the level of competency that they are on target to reach by the end of the year.

What do the levels mean?

To meet competency, students must demonstrate the ability to apply content and skills consistently and independently in multiple situations. When a student has shown evidence of this high level of learning, they are meeting competency. A level four (4) designation indicates that during a given unit or in a specific subject area, your child extended their learning beyond what is taught in the class. Level 4 DOES NOT equal an A. It is not expected, nor is it likely that your child will demonstrate level four (4) learning in all areas.

Achievement Level	At this time the learner is:
Meeting Competency	4 ○ Demonstrating complex application of knowledge and skills beyond what is taught.
	3 ○ Meeting learning expectations, ○ Knows both simple and complex knowledge and skills, ○ Applies learning, ○ Transfers learning to new situations, ○ Independently uses skills and strategies, ○ Consistently demonstrates skills and strategies in multiple learning opportunities.
Not Meeting Competency	2 ○ Approaching learning expectations, ○ Knows simple knowledge and skills, ○ Applies concepts when rehearsed and structured, ○ Uses skills and strategies with high levels of support.
	1 ○ Performing below learning expectations, ○ Has difficulty applying concepts, even when rehearsed and highly structured, ○ Has difficulty using skills and strategies, even with high levels of support.
	U ○ Unable to demonstrate learning, either due to missing work or because the competency has yet to be assessed.

How will achievement be recognized?

Students learn in different ways and at different paces. We want to focus on personal growth rather than traditional grades. By fostering a growth mindset, we can encourage students to keep working until they have mastered the competencies. Students will be recognized for their Habits of Learning during the first and second trimester. Academic achievement will be recognized at the end of the year.

CBL terms that you may hear from your child and your child's teacher -

- **Competencies:** A competency is a statement regarding the application of specific knowledge, skills and/or behavior.
- **Learning Target (Learning objectives, I can statements):** What the student will know and be able to do.
- **Depth of Knowledge (DoK):** The model that describes four different levels of cognitive complexity required to successfully complete a particular task.
- **Performance Assessment:** An opportunity for students to demonstrate their depth of knowledge, level of learning targets and/or competencies.
- **Habits of Learning (HOL):** Behaviors that are essential to student success.
- **Formative Assessment:** Assignments used to monitor student learning. These provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve teaching and by students to improve their learning.
- **Summative Assessments:** Assignments used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period.
- **Response to Intervention (Rti):** A multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs.

How can I foster positive Habits of Learning at home -

- Set aside a specific space for school work, away from distractions.
- Encourage your child to manage their time using a calendar.
- When he/she has a concern or question, encourage your child to speak directly with his teachers.
- Emphasize that learning is a process. There are going to be ups and downs.
- Ask your child reflective questions about their work.
- Provide encouragement when your child doesn't perform well.
- Allow adequate time for sleep and downtime.

How can I find out more about CBL?

- SAU 24 CBL Website <https://sites.google.com/sau24.org/competency-based-learning/home>
- Open House
- Parent Forums
- Your child and your child's teacher