

### Summary

Following the State CBE forum in December 2011, MCSD embarked on a design process that led to piloting CBE during the 2012-2013 school year. Approximately 1000 students experienced CBE pathways across all three building levels, and the district is currently supporting second and third teacher cohorts so that the work can expand for 2013-2014. Through a recursive process of design, data analysis, reflection, and revision, MCSD continues to refine the philosophy, methodology, and logistics of CBE with a focus on student learning.

### Definition & Vision

- Students need to be adaptable, entrepreneurial, and resilient, which demands a system that supports those demands and that growth
- A date of manufacture should not determine a student's path through her or his education experiences; instead, student readiness and agency should drive progress and pathways
- Competency-based education is system in which learning is the constant and time is the variable
- With CBE, students advance upon mastery through flexible use of time, place, method, or pace (fastest path to goals that matter with anytime, anywhere learning and no restrictions on seat time)

### What is a competency?

- A competency is an enduring understanding that requires the transfer of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to complex situations in and/or across content areas and/or beyond the classroom.
- **Competency statements** are designed by instructors around course or grade level essential learnings, which are assessed through proficiency levels tied to the Iowa Core Standards
- A competency is not just knowing or understanding—it requires *doing*
- A competency is the enduring understanding that overarches the standards; its value will hold over time rather than just in a particular course or grade level

### Design Non-Negotiables

- Learning anywhere, anytime
- No zeros, Ds, or Fs (RtI support “just in time” and end-of-term), & no extra credit
- Learning targets are clear and communicated to the stakeholders (posted and available to students in advance of the assessment)
- Assessments are tied to Iowa Core standards and to teacher-designed competencies; no compliance grading (separate learning from behavior)
- Students may demonstrate proficiency over time with reassessments
- Grading is based on the highest level attained (rather than an average) and is communicated through proficiency scales

### Contact Us:

Shane Williams, Director of Innovation & Instruction and Technology

Email: [smwillia@muscatine.k12.ia.us](mailto:smwillia@muscatine.k12.ia.us)

Diane Campbell, Director of Innovation & Instruction

Email: [dmcampbe@muscatine.k12.ia.us](mailto:dmcampbe@muscatine.k12.ia.us)

Andrea Stewart, District Gifted/Talented Coordinator

Phone: 563.263.6141

Email: [ajstewar@muscatine.k12.ia.us](mailto:ajstewar@muscatine.k12.ia.us)

Chanda Hasset, English Teacher and Curricular Leader

Phone: 563.263.6141

Email: [cvhasset@muscatine.k12.ia.us](mailto:cvhasset@muscatine.k12.ia.us)



What do people who are new to competency education need to know before they embark on this journey?

1. The compelling reason for change—start with the "why" and move out from there to the "how" and the "what". In Muscatine, we talked about the following: need to disrupt the antiquated system so that it can adapt to 21st century demands; date of manufacture should not determine a student's path through her or his education experiences; our students need to be adaptable, entrepreneurial, and resilient, which demands a system that supports those demands and that growth.
2. Definitions of terminology related to CBE to create a common language—deconstructing how this work is not just new terms for what our system has tried before. This philosophy and methodology are qualitatively different from past paradigms—this needs to be explicated.
3. An overview of a well-articulated design process, from knowledge-building to writing competencies to unwrapping/aligning standards to developing proficiency scales to differentiating instruction and assessment to assessing fidelity of implementation. Also included should be how to design effective professional development to support the above.
4. Communication—how to build feedback loops to engage stakeholders early and often. It is important for students, parents, teachers, counselors/registrars, tech support personnel, administrators, board members, community members, and higher education officials are included in the design process and in the evaluation of implementation. HOW to use the information gained from feedback for reflection and growth should be included.
5. Managing effective use of time, place, method, and pace as ways to vary learning experiences for students. Educators need to know how to individualize the learning process so that CBE is driven by student agency rather than by the system's agenda. If the Common Core is the floor—the base of what every student should know and be able to do—then how do we vary time, place, method, and pace so that the glass ceiling is removed and students can follow the fastest path to goals that matter to them?
6. RtI frameworks—how can we best remediate and enrich through the use of real-time data for just-in-time interventions that will support learning in this environment? Teachers and administrators will be concerned with the logistics of CBE and how they can successfully take learning "off the clock".

Given the state of competency-based education today, what are the most important topics for people that have already been working in competency education?

1. Adaptation of student information systems and gradebooks so that this transformation is not held back by limited resources. Most products currently on the market do not support standards-based grading or competency-based education from a philosophical or a pragmatic perspective. If districts continue to hit walls during their efforts to track and report learning or to flexibly schedule students' educational experiences along with how those experiences are reflected on transcripts, they may turn away from this important work.
2. Understanding CBE from a systems perspective so that the interconnectedness and interdependency of the system (local, state, and national) can be mapped and managed. This work cannot be completed in a silo and necessitates the preemptive work of identifying potential unintended consequences along the way.
3. Mapping policy evaluation so that districts and states can remove barriers to anytime, anywhere, any method, any pace learning. A plan for educating state legislators and education officials as well as how to include local boards and other governing bodies in the conversation will assist districts with the change process.
4. Building a framework for including community resources in CBE—how to tap into local, national, and global resources to take learning beyond the walls of the school. Districts will need support in marrying real-world learning experiences with competencies, standards, and evaluation by highly qualified teachers.

