Competency-Based Learning

Toolkit
Resources, Bright Spots & Tools

Learner-Centered
COLLABORATIVE

Learner-Centered Strategies

COMPETENCY-BASED

COMPETENCY-BASED

PERSONALIZED

AUTHENTIC

INCLUSIVE & EQUITABLE

Learning Experiences

What are learner-centered strategies?
Learner-centered strategies are actionable steps educators can take to create personalized, competency-based, authentic, inclusive and equitable learning environments.

What's inside?
In this sample toolkit you will find a selection of 3 learner-centered strategies tied to the **competency-based educator competencies**. For each strategy you will find examples from the field, tools to support implementation, and resources for continued exploration.

What's next?
These 3 strategies are just a sample of the many ways that educators can implement competency-based learning.

- **Access more:** If you are interested in accessing more, reach out to our team **here**.
- **Share your learning:** We also want to hear about bright spots in your classroom. Share them **here** or on social media and tag **@LCCollaborative** and **#LCBrightSpots**.

Resource Key

🖥️ Multimedia
🎞️ Tool
📖 Read
📺 Watch
🎧 Listen
🔵 Learner-Centered Collaborative Tool

What is Competency-Based Learning?

Learning Experiences

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In competency-based learning, otherwise referred to as competency-based education (CBE), competency-based assessment (CBA), and mastery learning, practice is rooted in the notion that the purpose of assessment is to identify what learners know and are able to do in order to inform their next steps.

Educators in a competency-based learning environment promote evidence-based instruction, assessment, and feedback cycles that drive learning based on progress toward desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Learners in a competency-based environment reflect on what they know and are able to do so they themselves can determine and plan for their next steps.

"The word assess comes from the Latin assidere, which means to sit beside. Literally then, to assess means to sit beside the learner."
~Evangeline Harris Stefanakis

Educators in a Competency-Based Learning Environment:

Use assessment and data as tools for learning

Plan with a competency-based approach

Create performance-based assessments

Implementing Competency-Based

Below are a list of actionable steps educators can take to make learning competency-based. **Click on the strategy** to find the page with a description, examples, and resources.

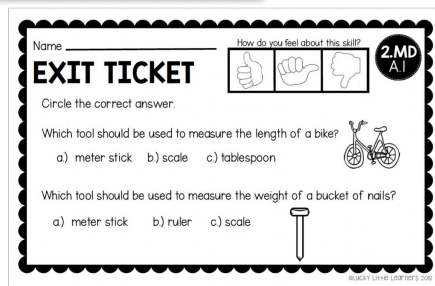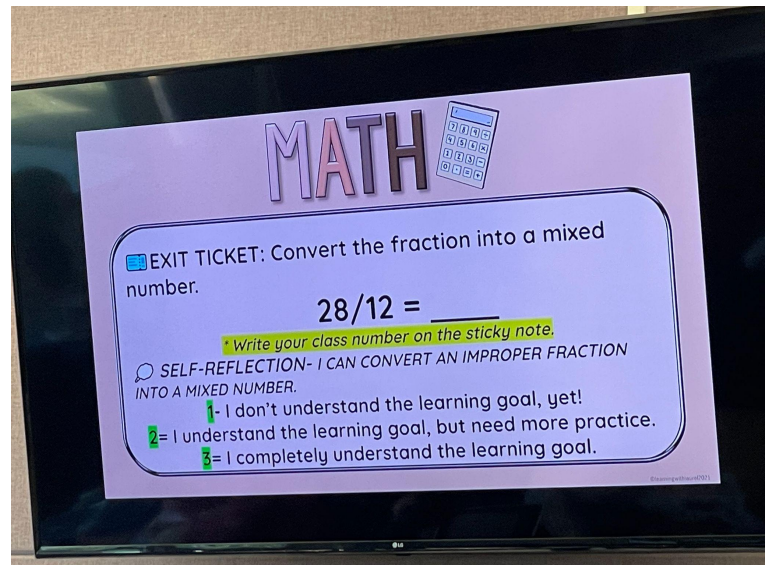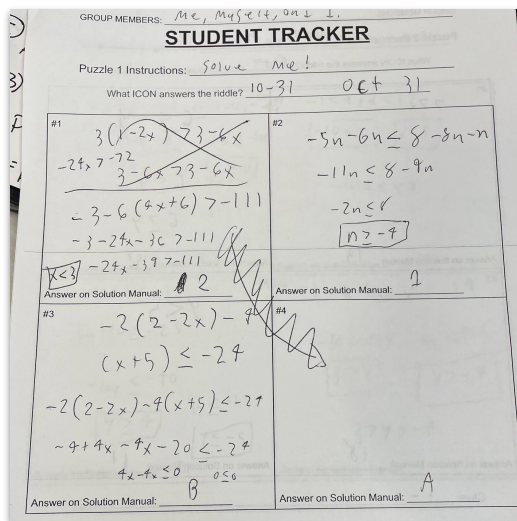| Outcome	Competency	Strategy
Use assessment and data as tools for learning	**Modify path, pace, or product**	Use data trackers Differentiate based on assessment data Use learner portraits Provide choices in what, how, where & when students learn Provide choices in how students share their learning
	Use a variety of assessment methods	**Assess formatively** Leverage conferencing as a method of assessment Develop self-assessment skills Leverage learning science to make learning more effective
Plan with a competency-based approach	**Design backwards**	**Plan assessments based on outcomes** Develop meaningful essential questions Plan a variety of summative and formative assessments Create a badging system
	Emphasize the iterative process	Plan for cycles of iteration Provide effective feedback Support learners with peer feedback Use critique and revision protocols to improve work
	Define levels of proficiency	Create clear rubrics Co-create rubrics with learners
	Connect skills and content to the real world	Unpack competencies and/or standards Leverage inquiry-based learning Consider why learners would care about the learning outcome
Create performance-based assessments	**Share outcomes**	Unpack rubrics with learners Separate academic and behavior outcomes
	Support learners telling their learning story	Curate learner portfolios **Host a defense of learning** Encourage a growth mindset
	Assess authentic demonstrations of learning	Plan performance assessments Leverage design thinking Leverage project based learning Host exhibitions of learning

Use a variety of assessment methods

I use multiple, frequent, and formative assessments —such as self-assessment, exit tickets, and student surveys—in a timely manner to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, to guide educators' and learners' decision making, and to communicate with families.

Strategy: Assess Formatively

Formative assessment is meant to provide information **during** the learning process. This can be very informal through digital games such as Kahoot or exit tickets, a strategy of asking learners a question or two before they leave the class or end a lesson. Another informal way to formatively assess is through conversation with learners, asking them their understanding or observing them working on a skill during class. Formative assessments can also be a more formal quiz or first draft of an essay. Ensure that the formative assessments are given with time for you and your learners to do something with the information that the assessments give, such as make edits or learn something new before the summative assessment.

Bright Spot Examples

Students in Mesa Union School District complete an exit ticket at the end of the mini-lesson formatively assess their understanding and inform the next steps.

Resources

📖 [Formative assessment strategies](#)
📖 [Moving Beyond Formative Assessment](#)

Strategy: Plan assessments based on outcomes

Designing backwards means starting with the end in mind and that is the desired learning outcomes for students. This answers the question what will students know and be able to do at the end of a learning experience? Once outcomes are determined they should be categorized as knowledge, reasoning, skill or product outcomes. This informs the type of assessment that would best measure a learner's progress towards that outcome.

Below is a helpful chart to think through different assessment types that fit specific outcome types well. Note that written response or personal communication (ex. Speaking with the teacher in a 1:1 conference) are the best ways to measure knowledge and reasoning outcomes. However, performance assessments are the best way to measure skill and product outcomes.

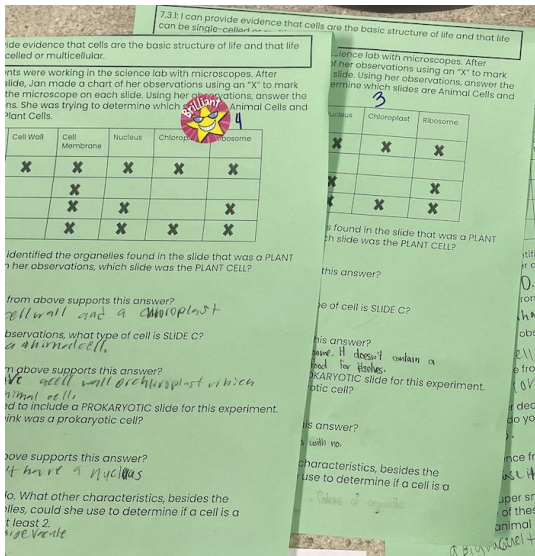|	Selected Response	Written Response	Performance Assessment	Personal Communication
Knowledge	**Good** Can assess isolated knowledge & some relationships among them.	**Strong** Can assess elements of knowledge and relationships among them.	**Partial** Can assess knowledge and relationships among them in certain contexts.	**Strong** Can assess knowledge and relationships among them.
Reasoning	**Good** Can assess many but not all reasoning targets.	**Strong** Can assess all reasoning targets.	**Partial** Can assess all reasoning targets in the context of certain tasks.	**Strong** Can assess all reasoning targets.
Skill	**Partial** Good match for some measurement skill targets	**Poor** Cannot assess skill level	**Strong** Can observe and assess skills as they are being performed.	**Partial** Strong match for some oral communication skills
Product	**Poor** Cannot assess the quality of a product; can only assess prerequisite knowledge and reasoning	**Poor** Cannot assess the quality of a product; can only assess prerequisite knowledge and reasoning.	**Strong** Can directly assess the attributes of quality of products.	**Poor** Cannot assess the quality of a product; can only assess prerequisite knowledge and reasoning.

Design backwards

I design curriculum units backwards, starting from essential questions, recognized standards, school-wide and/ or subject-specific competencies, school or district learner profiles and/or real-world problems to be solved

# Strategy Continued: Plan assessments based on outcomes

Bright Spot Examples

This selected response and written response assessment matches the learning target that is focused on knowledge.

Vista Academy Bulldogs @VistaAVPA · Dec 15, 2017

Transdisciplinary learning in action in 2nd grade. @VistaNGSS writing and scientific method, @ibpyp, math, and success criteria!
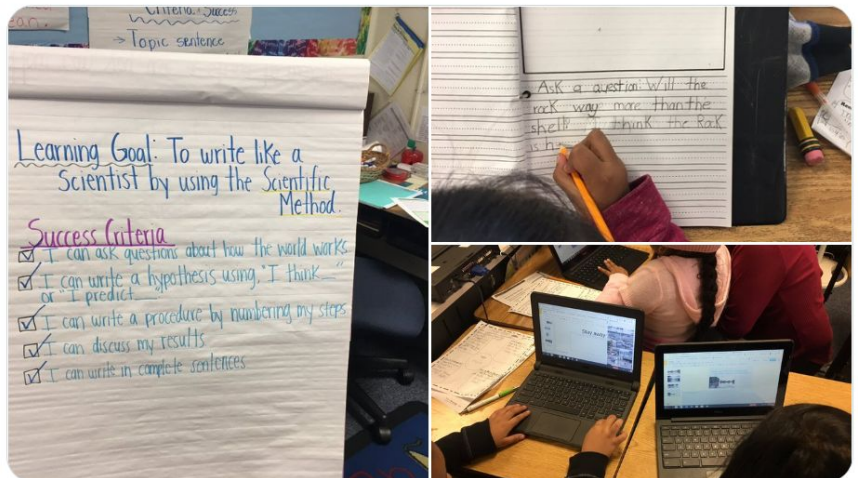
The learning goal for these students at Vista Academy was to write like a scientist by using the scientific method. This skill can best be measured through a performance assessment so students conducted experiments using the scientific method and then wrote about their findings in a scientific journal.

Resources

📖 Formative assessment strategies
📖 7 Strategies for Assessment for Learning
📖 Moving Beyond Formative Assessment

# Strategy: Host a Defense of Learning

A defense of learning is a way for a student to share a portfolio or a specific product and reflect on how they achieved the intended learning outcomes. A committee of peers, teachers, family and/or community members provide feedback and determine if the student met learning outcomes. This experience mimics real-life situations like work presentations and provides an authentic deadline and audience, leading to higher quality work.

Bright Spot Examples
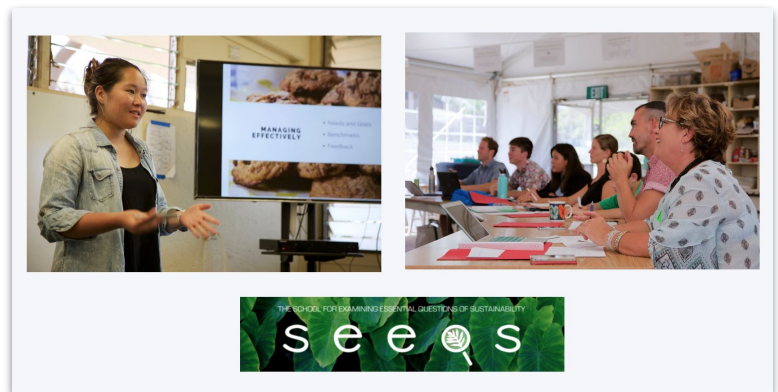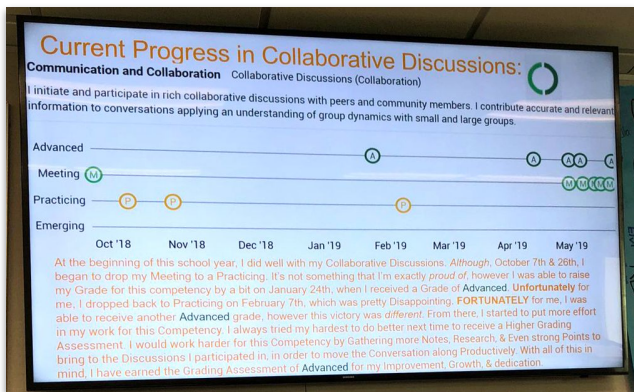
Scholars at Odyssey STEM Academy share their current progress on interdisciplinary competencies and share pieces of work as evidence of their growth to a group of their peers and family.

At SEEQS, students share their portfolio to a committee of educators and local community members to receive feedback on their growth and learning.

Resources

📖 SEEQS Portfolio Defense
📖 Student Thesis Defense
📺 Defense of learning in action

🌈 **LCC Tool:**
Defense of Learning Planning Guide