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Getting to **PROFICIENCY**

Helping Maine Graduate Every Student Prepared
for Parents

Parents have the ultimate interest in the success of their children. The shift to proficiency can seem difficult. It is unfamiliar, but it allows schools to ensure that every student achieves proficiency in all of the standards of the Maine Learning Results and the Guiding Principles.



The Maine DOE **Center for Best Practice** (CBP) contains resources for districts trying to implement school improvement measures such as proficiency-based or learner-centered systems. At the CBP you will find extensive case studies of school districts that have begun implementation of such systems. You will also find videos of students and teachers showing what proficiency-based education looks like in the classroom

Maine Department of Education
Center for Best Practice
www.maine.gov/doe/cbp



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What are the benefits of proficiency-based education? ... for students? ... for parents?

Evidence from school districts around the country indicates that the adoption of proficiency-based practices leads to improved student achievement compared to the traditional system. Students report that they understand more clearly what's expected of them, can identify their own strengths and weaknesses and draw on these understandings to meet goals. Growth in these areas creates confidence in students as they collaborate with their teachers – choosing their path, advocating for it, and following it to success.

Educators in Maine are seeing increased student engagement and increased personalization of instruction. Educators also report that implementation of a proficiency-based system leads to more collaboration between teachers, more reflective practice, and a greater ability to respond to the individual needs of students. The reporting system provides parents with more specific information about their child's growth and achievement. Parents are better able to understand what's expected of their child at each level school and, thus, are in a better position to support their child in achieving these expectations.

How will colleges react to this new system?

For more than 10 years, adopters of proficiency-based systems have approached colleges and universities, asking whether or not a proficiency-based system would disadvantage students. Overwhelmingly, these institutions of higher education have said "not a problem."

What is the role of parents in the implementation of proficiency-based education in their children's school?

Parents are their child's first and most important teachers. A fundamental goal of a proficiency-based system is to give parents better information, which will allow them to engage in their child's education at a deeper, more informed level. In a proficiency-based system, conversations between a parent and child are not focused on the perennial question, "Have you done your homework?" Parents are regularly informed and have access information such as how well their child is progressing, for example, as an effective writer or in his/her ability to solve multi-step equations.

What about student recognition and honors?

Recognizing student achievement is a vital part of school culture and a spur to student engagement. It is certainly possible to maintain all of the traditional forms of recognition traditional to high schools – top ten, GPA, etc. – in a proficiency-based system. Because there is a strong imperative to move away from averaging in a proficiency-based system, some districts are moving towards the Latin honors system – *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, and *summa cum laude* – which are common and familiar to universities and colleges throughout the United States. In such systems, rather than choose the ten (or five, or two ...) top performing students, all students who perform to high levels as *described by the standards* are honored.

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