Proficiency Based Learning: A Systemic Approach
Verification Systems Guidance

This document is intended to provide guidance to schools on systems for verifying proficiency of graduation standards in a proficiency-based system. In general, graduation standards are verified by a student's aggregate demonstration through summative assessments, which are aligned with the performance indicators of each graduation standard. However, there are different methods to aggregate student demonstration of performance indicators and this document serves to outline these approaches.

Approach	Benefits	Considerations
Course-by-course Every course or learning experience offered by the school has specific performance indicators aligned to it. When students are proficient in all performance indicators for the course, they earn the course credit.	• The system is similar to contemporary education models and it could represent a step toward a less rigid proficiency-based system. • It is easy for students to plan their learning experiences according to a school's program of studies. • In schools with limited collaborative time, teachers could still align their courses with performance indicators. • Most student information systems and reporting practices that schools currently use can be easily adapted to this approach. • Can help target remediation efforts to specific performance indicators, not whole courses.	• In some cases, students will not receive credit for a course because they have failed to meet one performance indicator: this can result in retention or in confusion from parents and students. • Maintains a credit-based system, which could potentially limit flexible pathways for student learning. • It can be more challenging to allow for flexible pacing for students, because of traditional "grade level" labels that are sometimes attached to courses. • Can maintain teacher isolation, possibly creating inequitable learning experiences for students. • Difficult to ensure that all course-based pathways provide all students with sufficient opportunities to eventually demonstrate proficiency in all PIs and Graduation Standards.
Mathematical Verification Across Learning Experiences This system uses the school's student information system to continually track student progress on performance indicators over time. Over the course of a student's career, teachers update performance	• Results are relatively straightforward and easy to calculate. • Utilizes scores on student work that has already been assessed. • Communication and understanding of student progress can be done in more traditional and familiar ways.	• Learning progress can be obscured when calculating a series of scores rather than evaluating learning growth over time. • May allow for less student voice and choice than a body-of-evidence approach. • May inadvertently limit flexibility and creativity when it comes to instruction and assessment.

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according to the student's most current demonstration of proficiency. Determining proficiency using mathematical verification requires teachers to use a common formula that aggregates assessment results on performance indicators over time to determine the achievement of a graduation standard. By using algorithms, such as power law or decaying average, students, teachers and parents see an accurate description of the student's current knowledge and skill. Performance indicators appear in multiple learning experiences and can be assessed at increasing levels of complexity.	• Existing student-information systems often use mathematical calculations to report student learning.	• May encourage students to narrowly focus on grades and numerical indicators of success, rather on their learning progress and skill development.
Body-of-Evidence Verification Across Learning Experiences Determining proficiency using a body of evidence requires a review and evaluation of student work and assessment scores. The review and evaluation process may vary in both format and intensity, but verifying proficiency requires that educators use common criteria to evaluate student performance consistently from work sample to work sample or assessment to assessment. For example, teachers working independently may use agreed-upon criteria to evaluate student work, a team of educators may review a student portfolio using a common rubric, or a student may demonstrate proficiency through an exhibition of learning that is evaluated by a review committee using the same consistently applied criteria.	• Encourage students and educators to reflect on and assess learning progress and work quality. • Emphasizes the evaluation of a body of work that has been collected over time. • Encourages students to take greater ownership over the learning process. • Allows for evidence from outside-of-school learning pathways, such as internships or dual-enrollment courses. • Can be used to involve parents and community members in the learning process, such as through a public exhibition of learning.	• Can be a time-consuming process for both students and teachers. • May be perceived as a disconnected, after-the-fact event rather than an integral part of the learning and assessment process. • May require schools to communicate student achievement differently than they have in the past, which may be unfamiliar or confusing to some parents and families. • Requires teachers, reviewers, and scorers to use common evaluation criteria and processes, which can require training and practice to calibrate.