

Does CBE change teaching and learning?

Although many think of competency-based education (CBE) at the level of school policies and structures, it can also manifest in classroom practices. Some of the ways teachers shift their instructional practices include:

- 1. Backwards design.** Implementing CBE can force teachers to articulate learning objectives much more clearly, and then design their lessons, as well as both formative and summative assessments to support those objectives.
- 2. Transparent expectations.** CBE helps take the mystery out of what it means to excel in school. Teachers in CBE classrooms spend time communicating what proficiency and mastery of content would look like.
- 3. Targeted feedback & communication.** Specific and clear expectations means that teachers can give more targeted feedback to students. It also means that feedback between students can become more precise, and teachers can be more specific when they communicate with parents, caregivers, or others about student achievement.
- 4. Supporting diverse student needs.** CBE classrooms often allowed teachers multiple avenues to support students with different learning needs; see "[How can CBE support learners moving at different speeds?](#)" handout for more information.

Keep in mind: Like any educational innovation, the extent to which competency-based education actually impacts teaching and learning varies tremendously. For some schools, a transition to CBE has been a call to action to restructure systems and processes. However, there have been districts where CBE has been mandated at the state level, but changes in instruction were very uneven (see Hechinger Report article below).

Learn more:

- Rinkema, Emily. 2018. "[Assessing to Develop Skill, Not Identify It.](#)" CVU Learns: One School's Journey to Standards Based Learning, October 29.
- Three (3) videos about CBE in the classroom: [Montpelier High School Biology](#), [History](#), and [Geometry and Competency-Based Education](#).
- Barshay, Jill. 2018. "[Documenting Maine's Failure to Implement Proficiency-Based Education.](#)" The Hechinger Report, Proof Points, October 22.