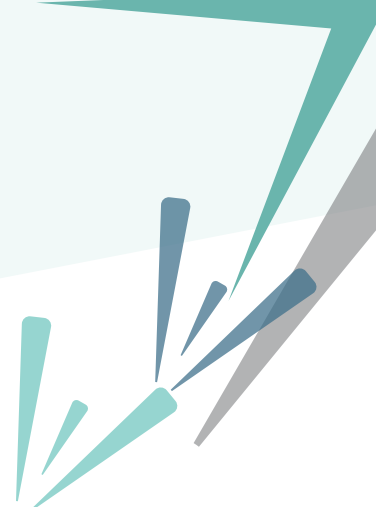


ALLIES IN POSTSECONDARY ACCELERATION

PERSONALIZED, COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING AND COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS



Interest in personalized, competency-based learning and college in high school programs is on the rise as education stakeholders embrace equity-seeking opportunities that put students on an interest-based pathway to postsecondary success. Both approaches disrupt traditional K–12 structures that dictate when, where and how students learn to make learning more engaging, relevant and aligned to postsecondary success. By integrating these approaches, education stakeholders can design an education system that leverages targeted supports and high expectations to ensure each student, particularly first-generation college-going students, has the knowledge and skills for future success.

KEY DEFINITIONS:

Personalized, competency-based learning centers each student’s strengths, needs and interests and provides differentiated supports and ways to demonstrate what they know and know how to do, ensuring each learner graduates ready for what’s next. [Learn more.](#)

College in high school programs include a range of programs that provide school-age students with an intentionally-designed, authentic postsecondary experience, ensuring students earn high school and college credit that transfers with the student upon entry into postsecondary education. [Learn more.](#)

SHARED VALUES: PERSONALIZED, COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING AND COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL

Values	Personalized, Competency-Based Learning	College in High School Programs
Equity	Personalized supports ensure each student can access educational opportunities and graduate with no gaps in knowledge and skills	Access to and completion of transferrable college credit, often at no cost, provides an onramp for underserved students
Readiness and Acceleration	Progression upon mastery ensures readiness for postsecondary, eliminating the need for remediation	Students complete college coursework designed by college faculty and consistent with college expectations, reducing the need for remediation
Student Agency	Students develop agency in their learning, leveraging their interests and aligned supports to achieve mastery	Students are encouraged to pursue college coursework aligned to their postsecondary and career interests
Relevancy	A diverse system of flexible, interest-based pathways ensures students remain meaningfully engaged	College credits give students a jumpstart on a postsecondary degree in addition to a high school transcript
Anytime, Anywhere Learning	Educators leverage diverse community and business partnerships to create engaging experiences for students	Students complete courses on college campus or in community settings where they can apply their knowledge and skills
Knowledge and Skills	Transparent learning frameworks outline the academic knowledge and skills necessary for success	A comprehensive system of supports develops the skills and behaviors necessary for college completion
Customized Supports	Formative assessment practices and targeted supports enable students to accelerate progress toward mastery	Navigational and advising supports help students overcome barriers to accessing, enrolling and succeeding in college

COMMON DESIGN ELEMENTS

In designing educational systems that incorporate personalized, competency-based learning and college in high school programs, policymakers and practitioners must incorporate the following design elements essential to equity and quality-seeking implementation.

- 1) **Aligned P-16 Competencies:** K-12 and postsecondary education work together to ensure that all learning experiences, including college in high school programs, align to clearly articulated P-16 competencies that describe the transferrable knowledge and skills that every student needs to be ready for success in college, career and life.
- 2) **Co-Designed, Accessible Learning Pathways:** Postsecondary, business and community partners are empowered to work with educators to co-design high quality, personalized learning experiences that ensure readiness and success in postsecondary education. This includes ensuring that opportunities to make progress towards a postsecondary credential are accessible to all students and facilitate the exploration of both academic and career areas of interest.
- 3) **Customized Student Supports:** Advising and informational resources are targeted to each student's needs, increasing awareness of options and ensuring each student has the supports to excel in a personally designed pathway most aligned to their interests and future goals.
- 4) **Increased Data Transparency:** Public reporting of disaggregated data focuses on student mastery of essential competencies and earned postsecondary credit to help education stakeholders establish equity-focused goals, shift resources and supports to close learning gaps and ensure students enter postsecondary without the need for remediation.
- 5) **Clear and Aligned Diploma Requirements:** School districts have the flexibility to create diplomas that articulate mastery of essential competencies and that ensure experiences such as college in high school count for credit earned toward both high school graduation and postsecondary education. Greater transparency around student outcomes improves the college admissions process and restores faith in the value of high school diplomas.
- 6) **Reimagined Educator Preparation and Collaboration:** Professional development and licensing programs prepare educators for new teaching roles and develop the talent necessary to lead in both high-quality personalized, competency-based learning and college in high

school programs. K-12 and postsecondary educators intentionally collaborate to ensure that personalized, competency-based learning and college in high school programming supports a seamless transition for students from high school to what comes next.

- 7) **Adequate and Flexible Funding:** Funding systems provide sufficient resources to ensure students can access all pathways across personalized, competency-based learning, including college in high school, regardless of family income or geography, and that school districts are not penalized by per-pupil-funding allocations tied to traditional seat-time requirements.

ALLIES IN ACTION: INTEGRATION OF PERSONALIZED, COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING AND COLLEGE IN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN OHIO

When Ohio launched a \$13 million Straight A grant, the Marysville School District applied to create an [early college high school](#) in partnership with Columbus State Community College. The winning applicants brought together other essential community partners including the Ohio Hi-Point Career Center and the local Honda plant to launch a manufacturing learning pathway in the fall of 2014. This became the first STEM-focused early college high school in Ohio. On the heels of this success, Marysville launched [a new strategic vision in 2017](#) to adopt personalized, competency-based learning districtwide, including a STEM-focused, mastery-based learning approach at the early college. Now, early college students benefit from personalized supports as they learn to take ownership of their learning and accelerate to mastery of postsecondary expectations.

As Marysville embarked on its transformation, an aligned effort was underway through the [Ohio Association of Community College's Success Center](#) to increase personalized support using a guided pathways model at all 23 of the state's community and technical colleges. Strategies implemented include one-on-one college and career counseling customized to student interests, focused access to dual enrollment pathways at high schools with large numbers of underserved students, accelerated entry into program coursework and one-on-one advising. A report by the [Community College Research Center](#) concludes that personalization is necessary to ensure support is aligned to student interests and that institutions best meet the needs of historically underserved students.