

Competency-based Education Kettle Moraine School District - Sharing with the Community

How does your organization define competency-based education?

Competency-based education (CBE) is a framework of learning and assessment that clearly articulates learning targets and competencies which recognizes students' voice, choice, path, pace, and place in the demonstration of learning. While aligned to district standards, competencies must be demonstrated before advancement, but competencies are not necessarily linear. CBE requires a balanced assessment framework, with students receiving formative feedback and supports as necessary to ensure mastery.



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http://digitalpromise.org/cbe_resource/kettle-moraine-sharing-with-the-community/

Overview

Kettle Moraine has established a process and expectation that we refer to as “strategic visioning.” Approximately every three years the district conducts a Community Forum, usually attracting around 100 community members, including parents, business partners, municipal leaders, school board members, teachers, students, alumni, and taxpayers. The original community forum started as a way to share the findings of the Transformation Task Force, a group of 25 individuals, mostly non-educators, who participated in a 17-month process of scenario planning. The Task Force shared their work and the resulting recommendations. That work launched our journey into personalized CBE. We reconvene the community every three years to share our progress and results and to ensure we continue to meet their expectations.

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Beliefs

The core beliefs that are listed below were developed and revised over time through multiple Community Forums, school board presentations, annual leadership retreats, and opportunities for staff engagement. The beliefs are informed by our data collection (quantitative and qualitative) as we work to transform our learning environments.

1. Our schools belong to our community and it is our obligation to meet their expectations.
2. We were charged to “transform our educational delivery system to better and more efficiently meet the needs of all students.” We can and must do better.
3. Our educators are the primary experts to do this work. The administration has executive authority to accomplish the charge and is held responsible for keeping the board and community informed.
4. Every child wants to learn and when given the opportunity, they will take responsibility for their learning. Seat time is not sufficient. Compliance does not produce deeper learning and will not serve learners beyond their K-12 experience. Students must be able to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and dispositions. Student agency is a primary driver of relevance and rigor.
5. The role of educator is increasingly important and has been redefined as coach, guide, or mentor.
6. Technology is a tool to facilitate the learning process and to provide the student and teacher with important diagnostic data to inform growth and to guide teachers and students in their next steps.

Rationale

Without community direction and support, the work is in vain. When the community’s beliefs and expectations are aligned with internal organizational beliefs and expectations, there is freedom to innovate. We are regularly checking this alignment to ensure that we meet expectations and do not get too far ahead of the community’s understanding.

Outcomes

Weathering several “storms” has allowed us to continue with our work and we have strong community pride and support for our innovation. These storms include balanced assessment (the elimination of zero, no grading of homework, and the ability to retake benchmark assessments), multi-age classrooms with students progressing on a continuum, block scheduling, and why we want our students to have voice and choice in determining path, pace, and place of their learning. We are recognized as a leader in our state and across our nation for the the achievement and agency of our students. Our student achievement data from the OECD Test for Schools demonstrates that our students perform at a level comparable with Singapore and Korea.

Surprises

Students want to be heard on this subject. They want to play a part in designing their educational experience and need to have a forum to share their perspective. Student voice is a very important factor to consider as we do this work.

Trade-offs

As we continue to move forward, it is becoming apparent that we are “in front” with both personalization and competency-based instruction. Being at the front means there are not many with whom we can collaborate. As leaders, we trade-off the benefit of a mutually beneficial partnership as most who want to partner are actually seeking to learn from us. One of the things that we give up and ask our teachers to give up is the “easy way” (or TTWWADI as Ian Jukes would say).

Considerations

- Take the time to lay a firm foundation. Without the strong case for “why” it is easy to get derailed. Make sure your teachers are given opportunities to develop their understanding. They will become the first line of communication.
- Go public with your work – transparency is essential. There are no “dumb questions.” The communications plan is as essential to your success as your implementation plan. You have to be deliberate in telling your story, internally and externally. You need to put processes in place to ensure that people have opportunity for your expectations.
- It is important to find partners in the work and celebrate the successes. We now publish a weekly update of celebrations across our district to anyone who will listen. We highlight celebrations at the beginning of every leadership council meeting, and we also feature celebrations at the beginning of every board meeting.
- Don’t try to take shortcuts. You must constantly check for understanding with your educators. Just because you have laid out a plan and rationale doesn’t mean that they have internalized it. It is hard work and it isn’t “one size fits all.”

Artifacts

- [Presentation to the School Board – May 17, 2016](#)
- [KMSD Strategic Visioning Report](#)
- [Presentation from the Strategic Visioning Community Forum – October 24, 2015](#)
- [KMSD Strategic Visioning Report – 2011](#)
- [KMSD Progress Report – 2010](#)
- [KMSD Scenario Framework Status Report – 2010](#)
- [Transformation Task Force Report – 2007](#)

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