

Competency-based Education

Utah School for the Blind and Deaf – Leveraging a Data and Tracking System to Measure Progress

How does your organization define competency-based education?

We view competency-based education as how you measure student progress on individual skills within a given curriculum. Personalized learning is the approach to teaching that allows you to measure competency.



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Overview

We are purchasing a new data and tracking system to monitor and track progress. Approximately two years ago USDB purchased Lumen Touch as a data and tracking system, but found that it may be too complex for our needs and users. Therefore, USDB created a request for proposals for a new data system and received 3 interested parties. Our administration reviewed these proposals and selected a new vendor.

Beliefs

One of our core beliefs is transparency and efficiency. Our current system made it difficult for all parties to be efficient and expended too much time on troubleshooting and not on school business. Due to the difficulty in using this system, it ended up limiting transparency with staff and parents.

Rationale

USDB focuses its resources to ensure compliance of state reporting requirements of student data

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and Medicaid billing. This system allows us to create graphs for annual reports. However, the most important benefit of this tool is all the reporting that teachers have to input for measuring student progress and writing IEPs. Our new tool also allows for integration of other tools that promote competency-based learning.

Outcomes

Nothing to report since we have not implemented our new tool at this point. We are hoping to begin the process of transferring data to the new system soon.

Surprises

When we purchased the original platform, we learned that just going to an electronic platform does not simplify work if you do not get an electronic tool that is streamlined and has a user-friendly interface. Sometimes the new problems are just as cumbersome as the pen and paper processes. As we move forward, we anticipate that there will be other surprises we can learn from.

Trade-offs

In purchasing a new system we will have to export data and train all staff on an entirely new system. This may be frustrating for some teachers who have gotten used to the current system and are not eager to learn another one. We anticipate there will be some bumps in the transfer of data and we are working on a short time frame to transfer the data in time for the next school year. However, we believe that a system that is communicating directly with state databases, is more robust in data collection and provides a friendlier user interface will be well worth the transition struggles.

Considerations

When considering the purchase of a data and tracking system it is important to study the work that must be done behind the scenes to manage the data. It is important to play with the interface of any system to determine if it is user-friendly. We found that when the interface was complicated and cumbersome that it did not accomplish all that we envisioned the system to do.

Artifacts

We would be happy to share how the transition timeline from one system to another and include what we learned that could benefit another school making this type of transition. We will also be able to share some screenshots and key reports from the new data system once it is up and running.

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