

Tennessee's Competency-Based Education Pilot

Background: In 2015, the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) established a Personalized Learning Task Force and invited Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) staff to take part in its exploration of individualized learning. The Task Force made several recommendations to help schools and districts across the state personalize learning for their students, including promoting the use of Competency-Based Education (CBE). In 2017, TDOE launched a two-year pilot of CBE with a sample of interested schools to learn what it takes to start up and run CBE programs.

The challenge: To individualize learning for Tennessee students using CBE

What we did: ARCC staff helped the state by:

- Assisting to identify evidence-based materials about how best to support CBE and about related topics, such as flexible learning, mastery-based learning, project-based learning, and student agency
- Providing advice on how to conduct a two-year pilot of CBE in a sample of schools
- Developing a *Competency Design Template* for participating schools
- Aiding in collection and analysis of data about how CBE implementation is going, and in understanding what the findings suggest about next steps
- Providing suggestions for planning, training, and work sessions hosted by TDOE and CBE specialists from Lipscomb University, and co-facilitating these sessions
- Providing face-to-face learning and work sessions with CBE pilot schools on
 - Content support
 - Social and personal competencies
 - Standards-based grading, grading rubrics, re-testing strategies and solutions, and
 - Facilitation of peer-to-peer group discussions
- Differentiating implementation support for diverse pilot site contexts
- Brokering collaboration with the Center on Innovations in Learning and highlighting TDOE's work at the 2018 Conversations with Innovators event

What happened: As a result of ARCC assistance, by 2019:

- 17 Tennessee schools are implementing CBE
- Additional school districts are inquiring about site-based implementation support
- Principals and teachers report positive feedback from students and parents
- A west Tennessee district plans to expand CBE from its middle schools into its high school
- TDOE is exploring ways to correct the potential misalignment between CBE and the state evaluation system