



## **Proud Past, Successful Present, Growing Future**

103 Central, Suite 300 • Glenwood, IA 51534 • 712-527-9034 • Fax 712-527-4287

### **What is Competency Based Education (CBE)?**

In competency based education students are evaluated on their knowledge levels and skills in a subject, i.e. what your student has learned and retained, not just memorized for a test and forgotten later.

### **What is the Iowa Core?**

The Iowa Core is a set of standards and benchmarks adopted from the National Common Core. States are required to teach the Common Core as a minimum curriculum to all students. The big difference is Iowa did not adopt the appendices that dictated what resources schools must use to teach to the standards and benchmarks.

### **What is Standards Based Grading (SBG)?**

Standards-based grading allows students to be graded on their knowledge level and skills (competency) in a subject in front of their teachers (s). If a student does not meet the Iowa Core competency level he/she has the opportunity to be retaught and reassessed (test, paper, project) and the new grade replaces the old grade. This way grading does not penalize the student for not meeting the Iowa Core competency level the first time the student is assessed.

### **What is a component?**

A component is a piece of an overall skill. For example, in order to write a paper, a student must first write an introduction that meets the average competency level for the Iowa Core. The introduction is a piece of -- a component of -- the paper -- the overall skill.

### **What is an outcome?**

An outcome describes the essential areas all students in the grade or course must know or be able to do in this subject. These are units of instruction that make connections among separate concepts or skills. From the example above, if the introduction is a component of -- a piece of -- the overall skill of writing a paper, then the paper is the outcome.

## **My son/daughter is not a good test taker. What if this process causes him/her to get bad grades?**

To the contrary, students who are bad test takers are able to be retaught and reassessed with the new score replacing the old score. Remember, competency-based education evaluates what students learn and retain. Students may be required to do additional work in advance of reteaching sessions in order to be ready for the session. If a student performs poorly on an assessment (test, paper, project) he/she will be retaught before being reassessed to achieve a [mastery level](#).

## **Why isn't homework being assigned anymore?**

We have developed a new policy for homework. If work is assigned for outside the classroom, it will be an extension of practice for concepts and skills begun in the classroom or as background to participate in the next days' lesson. Students are expected to complete work as assigned in order to practice essential skills for which students will be held accountable. Outside work may be recorded and will be corrected with feedback provided to students as to their success, but will not be used in the calculation of a grade on an outcome, component or a subject. The record of work completion will be used to help determine a student's "Citizenship/Employability Skills".

IF homework was assigned in a class or course prior to this policy going into effect, then homework WILL continue to be assigned and it is our expectation homework WILL be corrected AND feedback given.

## **Why doesn't homework count for a grade anymore?**

According to research around competency-based education, homework is a tool for practicing a skill. Therefore, since homework is a practice tool, homework should not be counted as a grade for or against a student. Think of it this way: when our students practice for a sport or band, the practice is not where the final evaluation takes place; the game or the concert is where the final evaluation of the skill takes place.

Competency-based education allows our students to practice their academic skills through homework. Teachers will give feedback and a score on the homework so students know whether they are advancing their skill knowledge. However, if a student is struggling with a skill and is unable to complete the homework or does the homework wrong, the student will not receive a score that could lower his/her grade.

**The grading/homework system has changed and it seems to encourage students who may not be high achievers (even below average), to succeed and get the same grades as those who do.**

Exactly. Those who are not high achievers are encouraged to become so. We want them to be successful and even achieve at high levels. Don't we want all students to be successful? It's hard to name a school where this is not the mission. This is what all parents and teachers want – especially the parents of formally-labeled “below average achievers.”

**Students who work very hard to get "A" and "B" grades will achieve these grades while working hard and studying.**

True, and to be honest, they will be working harder than they normally do because students will be providing high-quality evidence of learning – no padding with extra points here and there for behaviors and products not directly listed in the curriculum. This is actually more demanding of students, not less.

**It appears students who don't work hard will be "rewarded" by being "allowed" to re-take tests and hand in homework late without any consequences.**

Grades are not rewards, affirmation, validation, or compensation. Grades are communication; that is it.

Grades are first and foremost an accurate report of what students know and can do against standards, not a reward for hard work.

Example: A student works for six weeks on a project, but his project represents only a “D” level of mastery. He worked sincerely and did not slack off or demonstrate anything less than full integrity, but he just could not get it correct. He still does not receive any grade higher than a “D” just because he worked hard and was so sincere. If he were to get a “C” or higher because we factored in all his hard work, this would knowingly falsify a grade and that is unethical.

Grades have nothing to do with reward. The students who re-do work of any sort may not go on with the rest of their lives until the work is done. They have a series of re-learning and re-assessment experiences to do, and this re-do experience preoccupies their every moment until it is re-done. It is much, much harder to re-do than it is to do it correctly the first time around.

In addition, it is a false assumption students build moral fiber and respect for deadlines by slapping them with an “F” or a “0” for work not done. This teaches nothing, but resentment and cheating. To recover in full from being irresponsible or from not knowing something teaches way more than attaching a label to the earlier poor work. If we don't let students re-do assignments and assessments, then we have turned over their education to their

immature selves and that is abandoning our responsibilities as teachers because we have said three things that are unacceptable:

1. This assignment has no educational value, yet I gave it to you anyway.
2. Since you didn't do all this work, I'm going to let you off the hook from doing it. (How does this teach responsibility?)
3. It is OK if you don't learn this, which is the most heinous comment of all. If a student is acting irresponsibly, we don't back off and shake our head. We jump in and walk the student through his/her full recovery.