

Defining and Assessing Learning:



Exploring Competency-Based Initiatives

A Report of the
National Postsecondary



Education Cooperative

Announcing the release of the report, *Defining and Assessing Learning: Exploring Competency-Based Initiatives.*

This report explores competency-based models in postsecondary institutions and in other learning environments. The report is intended primarily as a guide for postsecondary educators who are interested in establishing such efforts at their institutions.

1

INTRODUCTION

Outlines background information about the Competency-Based Initiatives Project and charge to the Working Group of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

2

DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING COMPETENCY-BASED INITIATIVES: THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Provides a conceptual overview of competencies, including key concepts and definitions, as implemented in a variety of settings. This framework can be useful as a starting point for institutions that previously have not considered competencies and their connection to the learning process.

3

METHODOLOGY FOR THE CASE STUDIES

Establishes the methodology used by the Working Group to select sites for the case study investigation. Gives practitioners a quick overview of the criteria used to determine cutting-edge case study sites as well as glimpses of key issues probed during interviews.

4

PRINCIPLES OF STRONG PRACTICE

Presents key principles about the following dimensions:

- Planning for competency-based educational initiatives
- Selecting assessment methods
- Creating and ensuring that learning experiences lead to competencies
- Reviewing assessment results to identify changes to strengthen student learning

5

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Outlines an agenda for future work and a call for action at the institutional level.

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NPEC

The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative is a voluntary partnership of postsecondary institutions, associations, agencies, and organizations. NPEC's mission is to promote the quality, comparability, and utility of postsecondary data and information that support policy development at the national, state, and institutional levels. NPEC is funded by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

6

Provides a selected annotated bibliography to resources about competencies.

CASE STUDY ABSTRACTS

7

Contains abstracts of the eight case studies presented in section 8.

APPENDICES A-H: INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

8

A. King's College

Explores a mature institution where competencies are embedded across courses in all academic programs and support important lifelong learning outcomes.

B. Northwest Missouri State University

Explores a competency-based educational system that is linked with a strategic planning process.

C. Sinclair Community College

Explores a competency-based educational system with particular focus on the development of competencies and how they are assessed.

D. Hagerstown Community College

Explores the development of modules for technical programs and the new ways that student competencies will be assessed and documented on career transcripts.

E. Colorado Community Colleges Incumbent Worker Project

Explores the beginning development of an incumbent worker project that builds competency-based curricula in conjunction with large employers. Most of these competency-based learning modules will be deliverable in electronic formats.

F. Western Governors University

Explores competency-based programs under development.

G. Proficiency-Based Admission Standards System in Oregon

Explores the development of a competency-based articulation system between secondary schools and public postsecondary institutions in Oregon.

H. Ford Motor Company

Explores the competency-based system used in a corporate site where employees are assessed in the beginning as potential new hires and then throughout their careers as they are considered for promotions.

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