

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025**

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SENATE BILL 580

Short Title: Competency-Based Education Grant Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Lee and Jones (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 26, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE NORTH CAROLINA COMPETENCY-BASED
EDUCATION INNOVATION GRANT AND NETWORK PROGRAM AND TO
APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) Program Established; Purpose. – There is established the North Carolina Competency-Based Education Innovation Grant and Network Program (Program). The purpose of the program is to provide funding and support to schools and districts to support the transition to competency-based education (CBE) models that focus on mastery of learning rather than instructional time. The grant aims to promote innovative instructional practices, flexible assessment models, and systemic shifts to ensure all students progress based on demonstrated proficiency.

SECTION 1.(b) Program Objectives. – The objectives of the Program are as follows:

- (1) Redesign Learning Pathways. – Support schools and districts in developing personalized, CBE models that allow students to progress at their own pace.
- (2) Assessment Innovation. – Utilize formative and performance-based assessments that measure student mastery of skills and knowledge, including the use of AI learning tools.
- (3) Educator Capacity Building. – Provide common professional development for educators on instructional strategies and assessment practices aligned with transitioning to CBE.
- (4) Develop Strategies for Statewide Scaling and Best Practices. – Develop and share resources, implementation strategies, and lessons learned to expand CBE across North Carolina.

SECTION 1.(c) Phase One. – The first phase of the Program shall begin with the 2025-2026 school year and continue until the conclusion of the 2028-2029 school year. Public school units shall submit applications and complete any planning or organizational duties during the 2025-2026 school year with implementation of CBE in participating schools beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

SECTION 1.(d) Application. – The Department of Public Instruction shall create an application for the Program and make the application available to all public school units no later than 60 days after this act becomes law. Public school units shall submit their applications to the Department no later than 60 days after the application becomes available. The Department shall select 10 schools to participate in the Program no later than 60 days after the close of the application period. When selecting schools to participate in the Program, the Department shall prioritize schools that show a strong commitment to implementing CBE and innovation in



assessment. The Department shall develop criteria to determine which schools are most ready to transition to CBE. The application shall include at least the following:

- (1) A comprehensive plan outlining the school's vision for competency-based education.
- (2) A description of instructional and assessment shifts to be implemented.
- (3) A budget for use of grant funds and a sustainability plan to continue utilizing CBE after the conclusion of Phase One.
- (4) Commitments from public school units leadership and stakeholders.

SECTION 1.(e) Grant funds; Use; Training. – Grant awards shall be in the amount of three hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$330,000) to each participating school. Participating schools shall use the sum of ninety-five thousand dollars (\$95,000) each school year to receive training on the implementation of CBE in the school. The remaining grants funds shall be used for costs associated with the transition to CBE, including travel costs and CBE resources. Grant funds shall remain available until the end of the 2028-2029 fiscal year.

SECTION 1.(f) Selection of third party vendor. – The Department shall select a third party vendor (Vendor) that is an educational support provider with a nationally recognized, research-based instructional and leadership framework, including a High Reliability School model, a taxonomy of educational objectives aligned to classroom strategies, and a system for implementing personalized competency-based education. The provider must have published extensively in peer-reviewed and practitioner literature, have an established track record of working directly with K–12 schools and districts across multiple states, and offer professional development services, implementation support, and instructional resources developed and led by a founding education researcher with over four decades of influence in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

SECTION 1.(g) Department partnership with Vendor. – The Department shall partner with the Vendor selected pursuant to subsection (f) of this act to develop publicly available, standards-aligned proficiency scales for all content areas and grade levels to ensure educators in the participating schools have the tools necessary to successfully transition to CBE approaches. The Vendor shall provide annual professional development events throughout the regions of the State to ensure educators can engage in learning about CBE approaches, including implementation the proficiency scales developed by the Department.

SECTION 1.(h) Department duties. – The Department of Public Instruction shall do the following as part of the Program:

- (1) Develop, in collaboration with the Vendor, a CBE Network to support the long-term transition to CBE. The CBE Network shall do the following:
 - a. Provide strategic guidance and policy recommendations for scaling CBE Statewide.
 - b. Facilitate collaboration among grant recipients, educators, policymakers, and CBE industrial leaders.
 - c. Develop a long-term roadmap for CBE implementation Statewide.
 - d. Offer professional learning communities and shared online resources to support ongoing innovation and capacity building.
 - e. Develop methods of measuring proficiency for all courses offered as part of the standard course of study in kindergarten through grade 12, with support from the Vendor.
 - f. Disseminate developed proficiency measures to all public school units and post standards developed to align with the proficiency measures online on a publicly accessible website.
 - g. Conduct research and evaluation to inform best practices and continuous improvement in participating schools.

- (2) Provide support and technical assistance, professional learning opportunities, and access to the CBE network for all grant recipients.

SECTION 1.(i) Reporting; Participants. – Each participating school shall submit a quarterly progress report to the Department detailing implementation of CBE in the school. The Department shall establish the due dates and mechanism for the submission of the progress reports. Progress shall include available student learning outcome data, including evidence of progress toward content mastery.

SECTION 1.(j) Reporting; Department. – The Department of Public Instruction shall submit a final report on the outcomes of Phase One of the Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 1, 2029. The report shall include the following:

- (1) A summary of student outcomes reported by participating schools.
- (2) Any challenges experienced by participating schools or the Department with implementation of the Program.
- (3) Recommendations for scaling the Program Statewide.
- (4) Any other information the Department deems relevant.
- (5) Any information requested by the Committee.

SECTION 2. Funding. – It is the intention of the General Assembly to fund the Program established pursuant to this act with nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

SECTION 3. Effective date. – This act becomes effective when the Current Operations Appropriations Act of 2025 becomes law and if that bill appropriates funds for the purposes detailed in this act.