



March 2, 2015

Chair Robert R. Cupp
Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street
13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Cupp:

I'm writing to notify you of my intent to testify before the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. I am the Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at KnowledgeWorks, a Cincinnati-based operating foundation, focused on offering a portfolio of innovative education approaches and advancing aligned policies that allow each student to thrive.

I will be testifying in support of the broad contours of Governor Kasich's proposed FY 2016-2017 education budget as contained in House Bill 64. I am especially supportive of the Governor's call for up to ten Competency-Based Education Pilots for K-12, which would be funded in aggregate at \$2.5 million per year.

Governor Kasich calls for investments in education innovation, creates new opportunities for students by blurring the lines between K-12 and higher education, and calls for increased funding in quality early childhood education. Some of the highlights in the Department of Education budget:

- Continue funding for the Straight A Fund providing districts and schools with grants to implement innovative practices.
- Promote College Credit Plus by helping teachers in economically disadvantaged high schools get the credentials needed to teach college level courses and reward districts and schools that increase student participation in College Credit Plus and Advanced Placement courses.
- Provide more funding for early childhood education and increase the number of opportunities for economically disadvantaged students to enroll in high quality preschools.
- Engage students in learning by funding ten sites to pilot competency-based education programs that advance students when they master course content.

The Department of Higher Education (Ohio Board of Regents) budget recommendations from the Governor have an expressed focus on affordability and innovation. Some of the highlights follow:

- Fund a Competency Based Pilot Program to provide affordable, online, competency-based degrees for adults.
- Provide Higher Education Innovation Grants to public institutions of higher education for innovative administration redesign proposals which will result in cost savings to students.
- Increase the number of students who have access to a college education by providing need-based financial aid awards to over 90,000 students via the Ohio College Opportunity Grant.
- Increase articulation of career-technical programs with programs provided at colleges and universities. This will be accomplished primarily through continued work on the articulation and transfer agreements that allow students to earn college credit for appropriate career-technical program coursework.

I've been pleased with a number of investments and strategies that have emerged in the state over the last few years including the Straight A Fund, the Innovation Lab Network (ILN), Alternative Accountability Waiver for ILN districts (HB487), investment in performance assessments, and, of course, the implementation of college and career ready standards and assessments. The state has a strong foundation of educational investments and strategies to build upon to help Ohio become one of the leading states in the country. Governor Kasich's budget recommendations build on that strong foundation.

I'm particularly excited by the funding of pilots at both the K-12 and post-secondary levels focused on competency education. Competency education provides a framework for learning with the goal of mastery of academic standards through personalized learning and differentiated supports for every student. This is a fundamental shift that allows for greater personalization of learning. Gov. Kasich's recommendations help to advance a competency-based system that has the ability to be a game changer for all students.

Included in this submission are the following documents that may be of assistance to the General Assembly writ large and, of course, the Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education and the Education Committee as they examine the shift to a competency-based system. Please see the following documents:

1. Testimony by Matt Williams, Vice President, Policy and Advocacy, KnowledgeWorks
2. Competency Education Continuum by KnowledgeWorks
Competency education represents a significant shift in teaching and learning. This shift does not happen overnight, it often takes years of planning and phased implementation for schools to implement a model with fidelity. The continuum below will help innovators and policymakers differentiate between full-scale competency models and those that have begun to pave the way for this work.
3. Competency Education Series: Policy Brief One by Lillian Pace, KnowledgeWorks
The Policy Brief explores the definition of Competency Education, illustrates what it looks like in practice and which states have begun to migrate to the approach, and

explores two key federal issues that impact state's moving towards competency-based approaches: accountability and assessment.

4. Three One-Pagers from *Building Consensus and Momentum: A Policy and Political Landscape for K-12 Competency Education* by Lillian Pace, Jesse Moyer, and Matt Williams, KnowledgeWorks

One Pagers on: Shared Accountability, Productive Assessment, and Personalized & Adaptive Student Supports

5. *District Conditions for Scale: A Practical Guide to Scaling Personalized Learning* by Matt Williams, Jesse Moyer, and Sarah Jenkins, KnowledgeWorks

The report explores how to scale personalized learning approaches, such as competency education, based on the work of district leaders across the country. This document and its conditions can be helpful for policymakers as they look to make impactful, sustainable, and scalable investments.

6. Two state policymakers guides by CompetencyWorks and Achieve respectively can be accessed via the following links:

Necessary for Success: Building Mastery of World-Class Skills: A State Policymakers Guide to Competency Education by Susan Patrick and Chris Sturgis

Advancing Competency-Based Pathways to College and Career Readiness: A State Policy Framework for Graduation Requirements, Assessment, and Accountability by Achieve

As always, KnowledgeWorks stands ready to assist the General Assembly as they move through the budget process. We believe in partnering to achieve our collective goals. We are a national thought leader on competency education and can provide research support on best practices including what other states have put in place, convene experts to help the state build consensus or gain greater insight or traction, and be a thought partner. Ohio is our home state and we stand ready to partner with the state as it positions itself and its children to be competitive on a global stage.

Sincerely,



Matt Williams
Vice President of Policy and Advocacy
KnowledgeWorks

Matt Williams, Vice President, Policy and Advocacy,

KnowledgeWorks

March 4, 2015

Rep. Cupp, members of the House Finance and Appropriations Sub-Committee on Primary and Secondary Education, I am Matt Williams, Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at KnowledgeWorks, a Cincinnati-based operating foundation, focused on offering a portfolio of innovative education approaches and advancing aligned policies, that allow each student to thrive.

I am here today to testify in support of the broad contours of Governor Kasich's proposed FY 2016- 2017 education budget as contained in House Bill 64. I am especially supportive of the Governor's call for up to ten Competency-Based Education Pilots for K-12, which would be funded in aggregate at \$2.5 million per year.

KnowledgeWorks believes that competency-based education provides a significant opportunity for Ohio's children. Our ability to compete as a state—and for communities' ability to attract growth industries and create jobs—demands a fresh approach to public education. The one-size-fits all philosophy of our past and too much of our present doesn't ensure our future economic and democratic success. Personalized, student-centered approaches to teaching and learning are on the rise in schools across Ohio. We encourage policymakers and applaud the Governor to advance competency-based practices that give all students the opportunity and intensive supports to master the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and career.

KnowledgeWorks defines competency education by the following elements:

1. Students advance upon mastery, not seat time.
2. Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.
3. Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.
4. Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
5. Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions.¹

By integrating all five elements, high quality competency education ensures that each student graduates with the knowledge and skills he or she needs to be successful in college and career.

The pilots, proposed by the Governor, would breathe greater life into Ohio's personalized learning and education innovation investments by offering new opportunities to districts, schools, and, most importantly, students.

¹ *Patrick, S. and Sturgis, C. Necessary for Success: Building Mastery of World-Class Skills. A CompetencyWorks Issue Brief, International Association for K-12 Online Learning. (2013). http://www.competencyworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/inacol_cw_issuebrief_building_mastery_final.pdf*

These pilots should ensure districts address the following elements in their respective plans:

1. Focus on high quality implementation of competency-based approaches that emphasize mastery while closing achievement gaps between subpopulations of students.
2. Administer a balanced system of summative, interim, performance, and formative assessments that measure student mastery of academic knowledge and social and emotional competencies.
3. Build capacity of the state and districts to continuously improve competency-based approaches, identifying what works and refining strategies to maximize success.
4. Implement a personalized and adaptive system of learning and supports to close achievement gaps and ensure all students remain on pace to graduation.

Furthermore, to ensure that the investment is both systemic and sustainable, KnowledgeWorks call on the General Assembly to enact two specific recommendations essential to the success of the Governor's competency-based education proposals:

1. The competency-based pilots should not only plan for implementation, an important element in success, but be implemented at a district and not just at a school level. For example, in larger districts this could be within a feeder pattern (elementary, middle, and high school) with support and alignment from the district central office. This approach will allow for greater scale and sustainability post-pilot.
2. In addition to the current recommendation of \$2.5 million included in the Governor's budget, 2.5% (\$2.5M/Year) of the recommended Straight A allocation of \$100M/Year should be allocated to support these competency-based pilots to not only ensure that grants are district-wide, but also to invest adequately in essential tools, assessments, and professional development needed to support the move to competency-based instruction; provide an evaluation to allow for the data needed to scale this approach further in the state; and lastly provide connective tissue between the proposed competency-based investments in K-12 and higher education.

This is a critical moment for the state of Ohio. We, as a state, have the potential to invest in pilots that begin to build a system that can transform the way we educate our students. A competency-based pilot is the next step in this transformation - one that will help districts identify high-quality strategies while empowering policymakers to build a policy framework that will work in Ohio to maximize student success.

KnowledgeWorks stands ready to help with this effort in any appropriate way possible.

Finally, I want to thank you and applaud your leadership and the leadership of Governor Kasich and State Superintendent Ross on this important, high impact issue.

Competency Education Continuum

Competency education represents a significant shift in teaching and learning. This shift does not happen overnight, it often takes years of planning and phased implementation for schools to implement a model with fidelity. The continuum below will help innovators and policymakers differentiate between full-scale competency models and those that have begun to pave the way for this work.

	Traditional	Emerging	Competency-Based
School Culture	Learning happens inside a traditional classroom with little to no accommodation of student interests and learning styles.	Educators make limited accommodation for student interests and learning styles by incorporating real-world experiences and partners into the classroom.	Students choose from a wide range of learning experiences at school, online, and in their community. Educators work with diverse partners and students to piece together individual learning pathways that accommodate student interests and learning styles.
Learning Progression	Students are expected to master grade level college and career ready standards.	Students are expected to master grade level college and career ready standards and transferable skills.	Students are expected to master competencies aligned to college and career ready standards. Each competency has clear, transferable learning objectives.
Learning Pace	Students advance at the instructor's pace regardless of whether they mastered the learning objectives or need additional time.	Students may take accelerated courses if they demonstrate readiness. Students receive specialized support when they fall behind peers. Educators continually group students to encourage peer learning and maximize learning gains for all.	Students receive customized supports and accelerated opportunity both in-school and out-of-school to ensure they stay on pace to graduate college and career ready.
Instruction	Every classroom has one teacher who designs and delivers an instructional program with very little differentiation for individual students.	Educators engage in some collaboration across teams and content areas to align and differentiate instruction based on real-time feedback on student performance.	Educators work collaboratively with each other, community partners, and students to develop a unique learning plan for every student based on student interests, learning styles, and real-time data.
Assessment System	Assessment instruments are used at set times to evaluate and classify students, not to guide instruction. Students have one opportunity to take the summative assessment at the end of the year.	Educators use formative assessment instruments when they believe students are ready to demonstrate mastery. These assessments help educators tailor instruction so that more students are ready to master the summative assessment at the end of the year.	A comprehensive assessment system is an essential part of the learning system. Formative assessments guide daily instruction and student selection of customized learning opportunities. Summative assessments show mastery of competencies. Students take these assessments when they are ready and have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery.
Grading Policies	Grades are norm-referenced, reflect mastery of course standards, and are typically based on weighted quarters and a final exam.	Grades reflect mastery of course standards and skills and are typically based on weighted quarters and a final exam or project. Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of required coursework.	Grades reflect the degree of mastery of competencies ranging from advanced to not yet competent. When students do not earn course credit their record indicates competencies that need to be re-learned instead of the entire course.