

Tennessee Implements Competency-Based Education Pilot

Tennessee's Competency-Based Education (CBE) Pilot is engaging school teams across the state in a series of four workshops throughout the spring and summer to plan, study, and design implementation plans to launch CBE classrooms in the 2018-19 school year. Other states exploring CBE have begun at the state level with policy changes, but the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) has empowered districts to explore CBE first, and then provide feedback to the state based on their experiences during the pilot. The ARCC is consulting with TDOE to provide a variety of assistance to the department and participating schools and districts.

Seventeen schools from thirteen school districts are participating. Each school, paid a small stipend, is expected to attend four workshops, plan collaborative team time between workshops, produce a final implementation plan by the fourth workshop, and implement their CBE strategy in the 2018-19 school year based on that plan. The second workshop was held March 5th. The session explored how to develop competencies aligned to standards in ELA, math, and social studies, and generate assessments aligned with competencies.

TDOE defines CBE as creating individualized pathways for students by focusing on demonstrating mastery through application and allowing students to advance through curricula and grades as they achieve mastery. The pilot gives schools and districts the opportunity to explore CBE strategies, deepening the understanding of classroom implementation, necessary school structures and flexibilities, and policy recommendations. Ultimately, this pilot is an exploration of how to leverage CBE strategies to create a more student-centric learning experience than the current traditional one-size-fits-all system by rethinking approach, pace, and progression.

The ARCC has developed a pilot application template, shared examples of applications from other states, and collaborated with TDOE as they plan the processes, tools, and structures needed for effective implementation of the pilot. The ARCC will also assist TDOE by analyzing and reporting on the pilot and its implications for the next phase.