

Public Abstract

First Name:Curt

Middle Name:R

Last Name:Graves

Adviser's First Name:Cynthia

Adviser's Last Name:MacGregor

Co-Adviser's First Name:Kim

Co-Adviser's Last Name:Finch

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Title:COMPETENCY BASED GRADING IN STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENT

Competency-based grading models are trending in public schools all across the nation. The driving impetus of this study was to evaluate the impact of competency based grading in Missouri high school students' achievement. Much of the research is theoretical with a distinct void of extensive research-based analysis of intended outcomes. School administrators need information and quality research to guide best practices within their buildings.

This study first identified schools through a qualitative survey that have fully implemented a competency-based model, are transitioning to a competency-based model, or are maintaining a traditional grading model. After identifying and classifying schools using a competency-based rubric, Algebra 1 and English 2 EOC scores were analyzed.

Of school principals responding for their respective high schools, 9% had fully implemented a competency-based grading model prior to 2015. Additionally, 14.6% of respondents indicated their schools to be transitioning to a competency-based model. Whether implemented, transitioning, or remaining with a traditional grading model, 90% of respondents indicated their school had implemented a comprehensive learning progression through a state-aligned curriculum.

Analyzing the eight schools fully implementing a competency-based grading model, 50% of schools improved EOC scores following full implementation in both Algebra 1 and English 2. Of the four schools implementing four or more years, 75% of these schools increased their Algebra 1 and English 2 scores.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. Missouri high schools have moved towards standards based education. Survey responses indicated a trend and interest in competency-based grading models similar to national trends. Survey responses also supported that changing grading practices is an intensive and extensive process. Quantifying learning is difficult. Some schools have shown a trend towards an increase in EOC scores.

Three recommendations are given. First, a need for professional development and clear understanding of grading philosophy and practices exists. Second, an understanding of and recognition of implementation process requirements is necessary for educational leaders. Finally, more research is necessary further evaluating the impact as well as completing a human resource cost analysis study.