

Dr. Steve Gallon III, Board Member

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Ms. Luisa Santos

SUBJECT: COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION: EXPLORING INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES REGARDING REQUIREMENTS FOR SEAT TIME

COMMITTEE: ACADEMICS, INNOVATION, EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY
LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: RELEVANT, RIGORUOUS, & INNOVATIVE ACADEMICS

The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) remains committed to providing educational excellence and a wide range of options to all students, proudly offering an array of innovative schools and program models to its students and their families. For decades, M-DCPS has stood at the forefront of in-district choice and educational innovation and has become a recognized leader at both the state and national levels.

Most recently, M-DCPS was honored by Magnet Schools of America (MSA), a national organization representing more than 4,000 magnet schools and programs, as the top award recipient in the nation for the 2024–2025 award cycle. In January 2025, MSA recognized M-DCPS with 91 awards—more than any other district in the country. These honors underscored the District’s longstanding and ongoing commitment to curriculum innovation, high academic standards, diversity, specialized staff, and parent and community involvement. They also affirmed the District’s continuous drive to expand educational opportunities and ensure that every student has access to diverse pathways that meet their interests, talents, and aspirations.

At its core, educational innovation is about making education more effective, engaging, and responsive to the needs of students, families, and the community. One such innovative model gaining national momentum is Competency-Based Education (CBE). Unlike the traditional framework that measures progress by “seat time”—the number of instructional hours students spend in a classroom—CBE shifts the emphasis to mastery of standards and competencies. Students advance upon demonstrating proficiency, ensuring that learning is the constant and time is the variable.

Research strongly supports the promise of CBE. The Aurora Institute (formerly iNACOL) identifies CBE as a key driver of personalized learning, helping to ensure that students achieve mastery before moving forward. RAND Corporation’s studies on personalized and competency-based learning show that students in CBE environments demonstrate greater ownership of their learning, deeper mastery of content, and improved readiness for postsecondary education and careers. The U.S. Department of Education has likewise highlighted CBE as an approach capable of narrowing achievement gaps by preventing students from advancing without true understanding.

In fact, in 2016, the Florida Legislature embraced this as a viable consideration and options in its enactment of F.S. 1003.4996 for select school districts. The incorporation of CBE is currently reflected

in rules adopted by the State Board of Education and is also a condition for several Career Technical Education federal grants.

For students and families, the benefits of CBE are significant. Personalized pacing allows advanced learners to accelerate while providing others with the time and support they need—without stigma. Mastery-based progression reduces the risk of students falling behind or being socially promoted without essential skills. CBE also strengthens college and career readiness by ensuring students develop demonstrable competencies valued by colleges, employers, and technical programs. For families, this approach provides clarity and transparency, offering concrete information about a child's actual skill mastery rather than abstract measures such as seat time or traditional grading scales.

For the District, the adoption of CBE would reinforce M-DCPS's role as a national leader in innovation and choice. It offers the potential to increase student achievement, graduation outcomes, and equity. Fiscal benefits could be realized by reducing costs tied to retention, credit recovery, and remediation, while also maximizing the use of flexible learning models and digital platforms. Moreover, CBE enables stronger alignment of instructional programs with local workforce demands, embedding industry-recognized competencies directly into curricula. Collectively, these outcomes expand public trust and reinforce M-DCPS's reputation as a forward-thinking district committed to student-centered success.

In exploring Competency-Based Education, M-DCPS would continue to build upon its legacy of innovation, ensuring that students and families are not bound by rigid, time-based requirements, but are instead empowered by opportunities that recognize and reward mastery, achievement, and readiness for the future.

This item directs the Superintendent to review existing State and District policies, practices, and statutory requirements regarding seat-time and credit allocation to identify areas of flexibility and innovation; conduct a feasibility study to explore piloting Competency-Based Education (CBE) models in select schools and grade levels, with a particular focus on secondary schools and alternative pathways; engage stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community members, to gather input and assess interest in competency-based models; benchmark best practices from other states and districts that have successfully implemented CBE initiatives; and provide a report to the School Board with findings and recommendations regarding the feasibility, costs, potential savings, and phased implementation of Competency-Based Education in M-DCPS no later than December 18, 2025.

This item has been reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
DR. STEVE GALLON III:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent to:

1. review existing State and District rules, policies, practices, and statutory requirements regarding seat-time and credit allocation to identify areas of flexibility and innovation;
2. conduct a feasibility study to explore piloting Competency-Based Education (CBE) models in select schools and grade levels, with a particular focus on secondary schools and alternative pathways;
3. engage stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community members, to gather input and assess interest in competency-based models;
4. benchmark best practices from other states and districts that have successfully implemented CBE initiatives; and
5. provide a report to the School Board with findings and recommendations regarding the feasibility, costs, potential savings, and phased implementation of Competency-Based Education in M-DCPS no later than December 18, 2025.