



## Clear Lake City Elementary, Clear Creek ISD Competency-Based Education Case Study

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## ABOUT THIS CASE STUDY

This case study is intended to serve as a strategic planning and implementation resource for any district or school that is interested in implementing competency-based, student-centered blended learning.<sup>1</sup>

This case study focuses on Clear Lake City Elementary (Clear Lake), a K–5 elementary school in Clear Creek Independent School District (Clear Creek), located in Houston, Texas.

**Clear Lake provides an example of a school-based, ground-up example of competency-based education (CBE) in a student-centered blended learning environment.** The school's work has resulted in strong blended learning implementation that drives toward multiple specific elements of CBE.

The information that follows showcases the design process and early implementation strategies that Clear Lake used to launch its new model — and specifically its work to rethink **path, pace, and assessment**. Our aim is to share both the impact of the work and actionable elements of its evolution so that other practitioners may use Clear Lake's successes, challenges, and learnings to implement student-centered CBE in their own schools and districts.

<sup>1</sup> Clear Creek ISD is a district located south of Houston, Texas, with a student enrollment of approximately 40,000 students. As the 29th largest school district in the state of Texas, spanning over 100 square miles and operating 44 distinct campuses, Clear Creek serves students in the Clear Lake area and neighboring portions of the Houston metropolitan area.

# COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION: WHAT AND WHY?

Historically, PK–12th grade teachers have faced one central challenge in the classroom: ensuring that all students, with widely varying needs and learning styles, receive the supports they need to make the academic and non-academic progress essential for college and career success. With 20 to 35 students per class, teachers have traditionally felt compelled to teach to the middle, or the “average” student, due to capacity constraints and/or curricula that require new concepts to be introduced on time-based schedule, rather than when students achieve mastery of a subject. As a result, students often do not understand the purpose of instruction and assessments, and both academic and non-academic outcomes may be negatively impacted in three primary ways:

1. Students receive instruction that is not transferable
2. Students are constrained from advancing upon mastery
3. Students do not receive differentiated support based on their learning needs

However, technological innovations, a growing focus on competency, and new personalization strategies have equipped teachers to provide more meaningful, personalized instruction: Flexibility of *path* and *pace*, supported by frequent, high-quality assessments that help instructors continually tailor both of these elements to a student’s needs, have produced promising results for students.



This case study uses the [iNACOL and CompetencyWorks](#) working 5-part definition of CBE:

1. Students **advance upon demonstrated mastery**.
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**.

Ties to these definition elements are **highlighted** throughout this paper.

While this definition serves as an important goal, we believe that transitioning from a traditional instructional model to a competency-based, personalized model need not be immediate or binary: It is often much more realistic — and thus effective — for a school or district to transition gradually or to focus on different elements of this definition at different times. Even Clear Lake, with all of its success, is not fully competency-based at this early stage of redesign (two years at the time of this paper’s publication). They are, however, well on their way!

## DISTRICT APPROACH AND CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Prior to participating in RBL, Clear Creek spent five years building campus-based data cultures (a school-wide embrace of multiple data sources to measure student success and align daily instruction) and improving the rigor of assessments and instruction. Simultaneously, the district was also shifting to using much more specific, progression-based competencies in order to teach Texas's learning standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS) more deeply. According to Clear Creek's head of curriculum and instruction, "This [shift to learning progressions] was not a process to eliminate any TEKS, but instead a process to identify the biggest rocks, essentially emphasizing depth over breadth." To establish and execute learning progressions, the district took the following steps:

1. **Identified high-priority learning standards for all subjects.**
2. **Prioritized each standard and vetted for endurance, leverage, and preparation.**
  - a. **Endurance:** Will this standard provide students with knowledge and skills that are of value in life regardless of career choice? In future courses? Beyond a single test date?
  - b. **Leverage:** Will this standard provide knowledge and skills that will be of value in multiple disciplines?
3. **Ordered the competencies to create progressions.** There are typically six to eight sequential progressions for each grade level.
4. **Piloted the learning progressions**, including:
  - a. Solicited consistent feedback with teachers and school leaders.
  - b. Used assessment data to determine impact on academic outcomes compared to previous years.
5. **In addition to teacher-facing learning progression and unit plans, "I Can" Statements — student-facing versions of competencies — were developed.** These statements were specific enough to allow for student progress assessment and for students to understand how individual learning activities relate to learning objectives they are attempting to master. Throughout this paper, we will primarily refer to these as "competencies." However, they may occasionally be referenced as "I Can" Statements depending on context.



The competencies and learning progressions outlined by the district allowed schools to work from the strong starting place necessary to build strong data cultures, increase rigor, and provide actionable assessments for students. The competencies included:

- Explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students
- Creating a culture in which assessment is a meaningful and a positive learning experience

The goal was that the implementing the competencies at the school level would promote more rigorous instruction and assessment and more meaningful use of data.

Developing competencies and learning progressions at the district level, in addition to leveraging the district's strategic plan for helping campuses utilize those standards and tools, had a profound impact on instruction and teacher practice across the district. Primarily, these

factors promoted alignment across campuses toward a common goal throughout the process, allowing the district to move as a whole toward CBE through its unique combination of the “what” (competencies) and the “how” (strategic plan).

With the competency standards in place, all campuses were able to utilize the robust resulting data, which demonstrated overwhelmingly that students had different, specific needs that were not being met by the current model. Each campus was then able to use its competency data — along with the Raising Blended Learners framework and support — to guide its design choices, creating personalized pathways and implementing other strategies (such as goal setting, online adaptive software, small groups, and student-led conferences) to meet the individual needs of each student.

## CAMPUS-LEVEL CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

While Clear Creek's system-level conditions contributed significantly to the pilot's success, Clear Lake itself had also laid important groundwork for implementing an innovative learning model. Within the past seven years, the principal of Clear Lake implemented professional learning focus areas and new cultural practices that

allowed for a rapid shift to blended learning and CBE, including development of three key elements:

1. A strong community of practice that valued peer collaboration and feedback
2. Ongoing data-driven instruction
3. Personalized professional growth for teachers

## Community of Practice: Moving from Congenial to Collegial

When Clear Lake's principal joined the school in 2010, teachers had already established a strong, congenial culture. However, as with most traditional teaching environments, instructors were often isolated in classrooms and taught the same way year after year, without sufficient feedback to support practice improvements. After reading an [article](#)<sup>2</sup> that encouraged a shift in teacher culture “from congenial to collegial,” the principal initiated a collaborative process called Stoplight Learning<sup>3</sup> that aimed to organically spread best practices, regularly opening teachers' classrooms for peer observations.<sup>4</sup> You can listen to the principal briefly reflect on this shift [in this video](#) . Teachers posted a stoplight

poster outside of their rooms, color-coded to indicate to potential visitors whether or not the teacher was “open” to peer observation on a particular day. (Red indicated “please don't come in today” [often used when testing was being conducted]; yellow indicated “come on in, but we're trying something new today”; and green indicated “this is what a typical day looks like.”) Visiting teachers then provided feedback on what they noticed.

During the first year of implementation, feedback was often relatively surface-level, and comments were primarily compliments about charts, basic practices, etc. To deepen the work, the administrative team built

<sup>2</sup> National Association of of Independent Schools, <https://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-school/winter-2012/getting-to-no/>

<sup>3</sup> Mark Selkrig & (Ron) Kim Keamy, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13540602.2014.969104?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

<sup>4</sup> Assessment for Learning, [http://www.assessmentforlearning.edu.au/professional\\_learning/peer\\_feedback/peer\\_strategies\\_enhance.html](http://www.assessmentforlearning.edu.au/professional_learning/peer_feedback/peer_strategies_enhance.html)

 [https://youtu.be/Gdqf\\_7SP6Ss](https://youtu.be/Gdqf_7SP6Ss)

incentive systems (for instance, offering free dress days and shoutouts in staff newsletters) to help teachers provide increasingly productive, direct feedback about instruction. This shift in culture and attention to the specific practices, routines, and mindsets marked a

## Data-Driven Culture

Even before beginning their journey toward CBE, Clear Lake had already established a data-driven instructional process that used assessment data to inform instructional design. Clear Lake primarily engaged with data through campus-level data cycles, spanning approximately six to eight weeks, which included a full day spent analyzing data and engaging in long- and short-term instructional planning based on the results. After each data cycle, the principal met with each teacher individually to

significant step toward building a school community where teachers consider their peers experts and expect professional learning and growth to be ongoing, and it reduced anxiety about frequent observation and feedback.

discuss strengths, areas of growth, and how he might support them with their next steps. You can listen to the principal briefly reflect on this shift [in this video](#) . This level of comfort with data and the ability to analyze and respond to data at both the campus administrative and classroom teacher levels provided a critical foundation for supporting teachers as they shifted to personalized blended learning and CBE.

## Personalized Professional Development

Clear Lake employed several instructional coaches, each of whom held direct responsibility for teacher development through an instructional coaching cycle called the “cycle of continuous growth.” During this cycle, every three weeks, teachers met with an instructional coach and selected a specific area for growth to focus on, setting their goals based on Clear Lake’s teacher development rubric. After these meetings, principals and instructional coaches observed teachers in action, then provided feedback on the targeted growth area and the teacher’s progress toward attaining their goals. This robust approach to instructional coaching provided essential structure for supporting teachers as they began innovating with new teaching and learning practices.

The campus-level professional learning focus areas and new cultural practices led to significant improvements in student outcomes across the campus, resulting in turn in more rigorous whole-group instruction and increased timely, differentiated support for students. However, in order to truly personalize for individual learning needs, teachers needed specific guideposts and targets (the district’s “I Can” Statements, or competencies) and a process for putting those into action (the framework provided by Raising Blended Learners). Once the campus had access to those competencies and design support, the team was able to create a student experience that leveraged assessments, data, and class time to increase the potential for mastery of the competencies.

## THE REDESIGN PROCESS

In the fall of 2015, Clear Creek participated in a [Raising Blended Learners \(RBL\)](#)<sup>5</sup> blended learning exposure workshop. The team, comprised of district administrators, school leaders, and high-performing teachers, developed a vision and plan for transforming a highly traditional teaching and learning model to student-centered blended learning. Through RBL, Clear Creek set out to improve both academic and non-academic outcomes

for all students, especially historically struggling subpopulations. To improve reading and math outcomes in their subpopulations and develop student agency and associated non-academic outcomes (such as engagement, motivation, and perseverance) in all of their students, Clear Creek chose to pilot a station rotation model in kindergarten through 5th grade at one elementary campus. The district team believed that personalizing

<sup>5</sup> Raising Blended Learners is a demonstration initiative showcasing how blended learning strategies can improve student outcomes in a diverse set of districts across the state of Texas. More information about the initiative is available at: [www.raisingblendedlearners.org](http://www.raisingblendedlearners.org).

 <https://youtu.be/82f5LSfY7ig>

instruction would improve achievement for all students, close gaps in subpopulation performance measures, and support development of student agency. You can listen to the district's Executive Director of Professional Learning and RBL project manager briefly reflect on this shift [in this video](#) . The Clear Creek team selected Clear Lake as the initial pilot site based on its strong teaching and learning practices, data culture, school leadership team, and professional development programs and planned to refine and scale the initial pilot based on initial outcomes and reflections.

In order to define an actionable vision for student-centered blended learning for the district, Clear Creek ISD gave the Clear Lake campus team the autonomy to redesign the path, pace and assessment of learning. Using a series of RBL templates, the Clear Lake team engaged in a student experience redesign and implementation planning process, articulating a problem statement, root causes of the problem, and a vision for the reimagined student experience. These elements are summarized below:

1. **Problem Statement:** Despite a strong record of academic success for the majority of students, Clear Creek (and Clear Lake Elementary) recognized the need to 1) increase student agency and 2) improve the academic performance of subpopulations.
  2. **Root Causes:** During the redesign process, the campus team identified what they believed were the root causes of the problem in order to design a new student experience that would target these issues. The root causes identified included:
    - a. Students were not asked to take responsibility for their learning in meaningful ways.
    - b. Students did not have access to actionable performance data to monitor or make decisions about their learning.
    - c. Subpopulations had significant academic gaps on previous grade level standards.
    - d. Assessments did not always illuminate learning gaps.
  - e. Teachers were working really hard and not able to differentiate further without additional help or reallocation of time.
3. **Student Experience Design Pillars** [\(link\)](#): With the problem and root causes identified, the campus team set out to reimagine a vision for a more effective student experience. For implementation purposes, their vision was codified into core elements, or Student Experience Design Pillars. Among the influences on their redesign was Daniel Pink's book *Drive*, which emphasizes the role of "autonomy, mastery, and purpose"<sup>6</sup> in driving motivation-influenced design elements. You can listen to the principal briefly reflect on this shift in [this video](#) . The team hypothesized that students would stay motivated throughout the learning process if they created experiences for students that allowed for autonomy, mastery, and purpose. **Clear Creek's pillars included:**
    - a. Data-Driven Instruction
    - b. Flexible Instructional Groupings
    - c. Student Agency
    - d. Competency-Based Education
    - e. Differentiation/Individualization
  4. **SMART Goal Metrics:** To allow the campus and district team to track progress and impact of the pilot, the team established SMART goals, which they planned to review semi-annually. The goals were created around a number of different measures, including BAS Reading Levels, YouthTruth Survey Student Results, YouthTruth Survey Teacher Results, STAAR Math, and STAAR Reading.

Aiming to close gaps in academic performance and build students' skills around agency before they matriculated to middle school, Clear Lake's administrative team selected third through fifth grade teachers with strong growth mindsets and track records of innovation to pilot the initial program. However, the pilot spread organically to the primary grades throughout the year as more teachers requested to implement blended learning.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Pink, Author, <http://www.danpink.com/books/drive/>  
 <https://youtu.be/emlNGobKv6k>  
 <https://youtu.be/JgWV17ofF4U>

# ELEMENTS OF COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION REDESIGN: PATH, PACE, AND ASSESSMENT

As Clear Lake began implementing its pilot, it leveraged flexibility in path and pace to provide learning opportunities targeted to student readiness, need, and interest. Artifacts from Clear Lake’s work during the past

18 months are linked in the table below according to the specific element of the CBE definition to which each artifact most closely aligns. A more detailed description of Clear Lake’s approach to developing a CBE model follows.

CBE Definition Element	Category	Driven By ( <i>campus or district</i> )
Students advance upon demonstrating mastery.	Path/Pace	
Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.	Path/Pace	 + 
Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.	Assessment	 + 
Students receive rapid, differentiated and timely support based on their individual learning needs.	Path/Pace	
Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge along with the development of important skills and dispositions.	Assessment	 + 

## Path and Pace

One of Clear Lake’s primary pilot hypotheses was that redesigning the path and pace of learning in the classroom would give students the opportunity to work on content most relevant and timely to their immediate academic needs, rather than being taught at one pace as a whole group. Instead, instruction was primarily delivered through personalized, flexible small groups that used content aligned to each student’s needs at any

point in time. In addition to allowing students to spend more time on content that interested them, pilot teachers almost immediately observed students becoming more engaged, motivated, and confident. They also developed skills related to agency and an increased awareness of their challenges and how to address them, allowing them to decrease or even eliminate their learning gaps.

## Organized Around Competencies

Clear Lake was able to leverage the competencies within the learning progressions that the district had designed to keep its model aligned with, and focused on, **explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students**.<sup>7</sup> This level of granularity and clarity is invaluable as teachers and students identify

the competencies a student needs to work on to master a learning objective. Each competency, written in student-friendly “I Can” Statements, provides teachers and students a shared taxonomy for communicating about learning. Students are consistently asked by their teachers, peers, and other adults on campus:

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed definition and explanation of CBE as presented by iNACOL, see the International Association for K12 Online Learning: <https://www.inacol.org/>

1. On which learning activity are you working?
2. Why are you working on a particular learning activity?
3. What is your goal?

When Clear Lake students are asked about their work, they frequently reference specific “I Can” Statements (competencies) they are working on and the learning data that informs their choices. Clear Lake teachers believed

students must be able to articulate what they know and what they need to know in both the academic and non-academic domains to truly build agency. Thus, the competencies, and the way in which students pursue them, reflect an emphasis on the application and creation of knowledge and the development of important skills and dispositions.<sup>8</sup>

## Students Advance Upon Demonstrating Mastery

Students are allowed multiple attempts to demonstrate mastery of a competency, thereby allowing them to move at different paces along different paths. Students can use the following tools to demonstrate mastery of the competencies:

- Formative assessments aligned to competencies in learning progressions
- District-developed reading and math benchmark assessments
- Checkpoints
- Running records
- Unit tests
- Reading level assessments (BAS Reading Assessment)
- One-on-one math assessments (DNC Math Assessment)
- RAZ Kids formative assessments
- Lexia Core5 online assessments

Teachers support students in tracking mastery of competencies through intentional classroom routines and one-on-one conferences. Students use the data that drives these routines and conferences to make choices during station work time, which they move through at their own pace. To support students in making effective choices, teachers coach students to ask themselves, “Do I understand this well enough to move on? Could I teach someone else this skill? Do I feel like I am an expert on this skill?” When students complete the practice activity at a station or feel ready to move on to another station aligned to one of their learning goals, they may do so at any time, rather than waiting to be directed by a teacher. When students are given more ownership over the time that they spend practicing a skill, they are more engaged in the practice and more reflective about their own level of mastery.

## Differentiated and Timely Support Based on Individual Learning Needs

Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs<sup>9</sup> through direct teacher instruction in a small-group format and can take advantage of multiple pathways for mastering competencies during other stations in a station rotation model. Teachers rely on data from various assessments to

build content for learning pathways, develop lessons, and group students for small-group instruction.<sup>10</sup> This data also helps teachers identify students’ individual learning needs and informs a collaborative process between teachers and students to differentiate content and direct instruction.

<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed definition and explanation of CBE as presented by iNACOL, see the International Association for K12 Online Learning: <https://www.inacol.org/>

<sup>9</sup> For a more detailed definition and explanation of CBE as presented by iNACOL, see the International Association for K12 Online Learning: <https://www.inacol.org/>

<sup>10</sup> Multiple assessments include formative assessments, benchmarks, checkpoints, one-on-one math assessments (primary grades), running records, unit assessments, and reading level assessments.

## Small-Group Instruction: Data Informs Targeted Competencies and Groupings

Teachers personalize path and pace for students both during first-time direct instruction (when introducing specific content or skills for the first time) and during subsequent differentiated instruction and remediation, both of which take place in small, flexible instructional groups. In some pilot classrooms, students are pulled for small-group lessons for *all* new instruction in both math and reading: For example, in a co-teaching kindergarten classroom, all first-time direct instruction is provided through small groups for 40 students shared between two classrooms.

On the front end, data informs the lesson topics, instructional approach, and student groupings in the classroom. For example, student groups are based on learning data on a specific standard or skill, rather than a reading level or an average assessment score; drilling down to the specific standard allows the teacher to support each group on a specific skill or strategy where

they may require additional instruction or remediation. This approach allows students to get exactly what they need and less of what they don't need from the start of each learning cycle: The content is neither too challenging nor too simple, and it is delivered to each student when he or she is ready based on the student's individual learning data. In Clear Lake's pilot, students also better understood why they were in small groups and how what they were learning was directly relevant to their goals.

Anecdotally, shifting to personalized first-time direct instruction with subsequent differentiated supporting instruction and remediation has also led to higher levels of teacher satisfaction: Teachers report that having increased time to connect with students in a smaller-group format improves relationships and that they are more confident about meeting the individual needs of each student.

## Station Work: Multiple Pathways to Master Competencies

Each station includes specific pathways that allow students to practice competencies in the way that is most effective for them. Stations often include skill- and strategy-based reading stations, skill- and strategy-based math stations, partner reading, word work, and online content (e.g., Lexia Core5, DreamBox, StemScopes or National Geographic). Teachers choose how long station rotations last: most classrooms are in station rotation about two hours daily (one hour for math and one hour for reading), but some may stay in station rotations for up to five hours to accommodate the more intensive needs of first-time instruction in personalized small groups (as described above).

During station rotation time, students choose among options aligned to the standards or skills they need to practice. For example, students might choose a listening station book based on their reading level or a word work activity based on the concepts they are attempting to master. Their paths vary: Some might be working on closing a proficiency gap for a previously taught standard, while others may move ahead to a new standard they are ready to learn. Many times, multiple stations are offered for a single competency, which allows students to practice activities of interest. Most students choose to work toward mastery of between two and five goals simultaneously.

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<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed definition and explanation of CBE as presented by iNACOL, see the International Association for K12 Online Learning: <https://www.inacol.org/>

## Planning for Small-Group and Station Work

When planning for timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning<sup>11</sup> needs, Clear Lake teachers address five main components: objectives, standards, key points, checks for understanding, and a practice activity. They also consider student assessment results as they plan and develop instruction and station work, which helps ensure that they are prepared to help students who are ready to tackle a new learning progression or competency move forward into appropriately rigorous content. This approach to planning represents a shift from linear lessons and activities that are delivered in a whole-group format to lessons that can be taught at different times throughout the year, providing multiple entry points for students to access lessons based on mastery of prerequisite competencies.

While some teachers build new lesson plans from scratch, others leverage content from previous unit plans and the district's scope and sequence map. Many teachers also deploy practice activities used in the past during station time (e.g., listening stations or math fluency stations), personalizing activities to each individual student whenever possible. And, because each student accesses lessons at his or her own pace, content is available throughout the entire school year — rather than only at a specified time.

Clear Lake's pilot teachers have improved their planning processes and instructional offerings as they have gained experience. For example, some have realized that not

all stations have to be *personalized* to the individual need of the student (e.g., a math station aligned to one competency, where only students who need support on that competency work on that station). Instead, some may be *differentiated* for a *group* of learners (e.g., book clubs, where all students at a certain reading level read the same book, regardless of the more specific competencies that different learners are working on) or taught within a larger, heterogenous group (e.g., shared reading in a balanced literacy block, which has been shown to benefit all students, regardless of their reading level).

Among the most important considerations for teachers as they plan instruction is whether students gain more from working in homogeneous or heterogeneous skill groups to master a particular skill level. Clear Lake teachers have also realized all stations do not need to be launched at the beginning of the year or even the beginning of a unit. Instead, they learned to gradually add or revise existing stations based on student data and upcoming needs, which helped to mitigate some of the stress and workload of launching personalized small-group instruction and stations — especially during the first year. In some cases, Clear Lake teachers also identified a need for new resources (e.g., additional reading passages and materials or books that tied to specific competencies) and have been proactive about acquiring these resources.



## ASSESSMENT

Clear Creek has undertaken deliberate work to redesign assessments. Without this essential work, their efforts toward shifting the path and pace of learning at the classroom level would not have been possible. Since no single assessment exists to measure mastery at the appropriate depth and frequency required to know, at all

times, what competencies students have mastered, Clear Creek identified multiple assessments for tracking student mastery. This new approach to assessment as a driver of instruction provides teachers with a comprehensive and ongoing (“live”) view into a student’s current mastery of the learning progressions.

### Multiple Data Sources

Clear Lake teachers utilize multiple assessments to track student progress toward mastery of the competencies represented by the “I Can” Statements. These include:

- Formative assessments aligned to competencies in learning progressions
- District developed reading and math benchmark assessments
- Checkpoints
- Running records
- Unit tests
- Reading level assessments (BAS Reading Assessment)
- One-on-one math assessments (DNC Math Assessment)
- RAZ Kids formative assessments
- Lexia Core5 online assessments

Due to time constraints and the number of competencies that Clear Creek targets, Clear Lake teachers use the district's standards to prioritize the competencies, which makes it more feasible to track mastery over time. The thoughtful combination of assessments provides

extensive data that informs all parts of instruction, from the book bins from which students choose reading materials to the listening stations they select to the small groups they join for direct instruction.

## Multiple Opportunities to Demonstrate Mastery

Pilot teachers used all available assessments (BAS Reading Levels, District Benchmarks, STAAR Math and Reading, formative assessments, unit assessments, and running records) to track mastery of the competencies within the learning progressions. Clear Lake's system allows students to prove mastery of a given competency in a variety of ways: For instance, if a student takes an assessment (such as a district benchmark) and does not demonstrate mastery on a certain skill, he or she can still mark that skill as "mastered" if he or she demonstrates mastery of the skill in another way or on a different assessment. Teachers constantly evaluate and refine this system to ensure that students retain skills and information and can still demonstrate mastery on the next major assessment.

Currently, Clear Lake teachers believe a student's

motivation to show progress on competencies is more important than proving that mastery is permanent. While demonstrating mastery immediately after working on a standard (for example, on a short quiz immediately after learning content) does not necessarily reflect permanent mastery the way that demonstrating mastery on a unit assessment or summative assessment (often covering a wider range of content, with more distance between learning the content and taking the assessment) might, teachers believe that student motivation is currently more important than permanence of mastery. This is a short-term trade-off that the campus team has decided to make during the early pilot phase, and they are constantly examining data to ensure that formative and other interim assessments are strong indicators of longer-term success with a competency.

## Transparency in Learning

Teachers and students track data for all assessments in a student-facing individual and class tracker, teacher grade books, and district online grade platforms. With student-facing "I Can" Statements matched to competencies, students are able to record their mastery in goal binders,

also known as "heat maps." Having consistent "I Can" Statements allows for a similar process across the campus, and with their learning data literally at their fingertips, students are empowered to develop agency and make data-informed decisions about their own learning.

## Continuing to Refine the Feedback Cycle

As the pilot continues to progress, Clear Lake teachers constantly assess and refine their assessment practices. For example, some are piloting ways to assess competencies online in order to avoid some of the challenges associated with paper-based assessments, allowing them to conduct assessments more frequently and scale the pilot more effectively across the campus. In

order to save time, Clear Lake teachers are also piloting ways to conduct assessments and track student mastery simultaneously by using programs that automatically populate back-end data with assessment results (e.g., AMC Math Anywhere and Google Forms).

## Path and Pace Artifacts

Element	Artifact
<b>Organized Around Competencies</b>	<p><a href="#">“I Can” Statement Trackers</a>: Students at Clear Lake (Clear Creek ISD) use “I Can” Statement Trackers” to identify standards based on district benchmark and common assessments. Students use the trackers to choose station activities that will provide extra support or practice in areas they have not yet mastered.</p> <p><a href="#">Sample Kindergarten Goal Folder Template</a>: The Goal Folder is where students track their progress toward mastery of the learning progressions. The concepts are intentionally written in student-friendly language, allowing students to more easily monitor their progression, set goals, and keep feedback from their teachers to reference when working independently.</p> <p><a href="#">Completed Student Sample</a>: The sample tracker is included in a student’s Goal Folder and shows how students track goal-setting and concept mastery in order to guide their station selections.</p> <p><a href="#">Sample Learning Progression</a>: District-created Learning Progressions are a thoughtful sequence of competencies created for each grade level. Learning Progressions are intended to support teachers in planning rigorous, standards-based instruction.</p>
<b>Students Advance Upon Demonstrating Mastery</b>	<p><a href="#">Students Describe Choosing a Station</a>: Students describe how they are empowered to choose station activities that match the skills that they need to develop further.</p> <p><a href="#">Goal Folder</a>: Students use a Goal Folder to help them track which stations they have completed in a given week and where they still need to go. This process helps to ensure that no student is at the same station multiple days in a row and helps with classroom flow by keeping an appropriate number of students at each station.</p> <p><a href="#">On-Demand Assessments</a>: Students take formative assessments when they feel they are ready to demonstrate mastery of the competency they have been working on during stations and small-group instruction.</p> <p><a href="#">Process for Student to Determine Mastery Readiness</a>: This tracker allows students to record their current level of mastery and set next steps to master their goals.</p> <p><a href="#">Multiple Forms of Mastery Tracking</a>: This tracker demonstrates how students track mastery using multiple data sources.</p> <p><a href="#">Goal-Setting for Different Online Programs</a>: These examples show students setting goals for different types of online learning programs depending on their own academic needs.</p> <p><a href="#">Goal-Setting Sample</a>: These examples show students set one of multiple goals in their kindergarten classroom.</p> <p><a href="#">Seesaw Support to Demonstrate Mastery</a>: Student-facing support structures help students to demonstrate individual mastery of a competency during small-group time.</p> <p><a href="#">Classroom is Design to Support Advancing Independently</a>: Sample classroom designed to support students advancing upon mastery. Included is a <a href="#">second</a> and <a href="#">third</a> view of how the classroom has been restructured to support students making choices and driving their own learning.</p> <p><a href="#">Photo of Students Working at Their Own Pace</a>: Photograph of students working independently at their own pace.</p> <p><a href="#">Sample Station Options</a>: Sample of how a teacher shows students which stations align to which “I Can” Statement so that they are able to make appropriate choices for their learning path.</p>
<b>Differentiated and Timely Support Based on Individual Learning Needs</b>	<p><a href="#">Teacher Describe Planning for Stations</a>: First grade teachers at Clear Lake describe using data to plan stations twice a week to ensure that lessons are personalized and adjusted for students’ needs and progress. The learning progressions serve as the backbone for this path, or the content students are working on.</p> <p><a href="#">Standard-Specific Station Work</a>: Sample of a station aligned to one competency. Students choose to work on this station if they know that they need to work on that competency.</p> <p><a href="#">Sample Personalized Book Bins</a>: Sample of personalized book bins that students use to develop improve their reading level. Teachers put new books into the bins after each assessment to ensure that students are practicing at the appropriate level.</p>

[Sample Listening Station](#): Sample of listening station in a kindergarten classroom.

[Kindergarten Daily Schedule](#): The long blocks of time for station rotation allow teachers pull small groups, conference with students about their goals, and manage student behaviors. Longer blocks of time and an increased number of small groups that can be pulled allow for more flexibility.

[Sample Classroom Schedule](#): This sample classroom schedule shows how flexible small-group instruction fits into the daily schedule.

[Sample Small-Group Schedule](#): This sample classroom schedule shows how students know which group they will be in on a given day.

[Sample District Progress Report](#): Sample progress report that is used district wide to communicate academic progress to families.

[Teacher Data Tracking](#): Sample of one teacher's data tracker that she uses to record students' mastery.

[Student Facing LMS Homepage](#): This view shows what students see when logging into itslearning (a learning management system) and choosing an online learning program from the list.

[Student-Facing View of its learning](#): This view shows what students see when they have chosen a standard to work on in itslearning. Here, the teacher has curated all of the content in the playlists.

[Student Facing View of online content 1](#): This example shows how students practice and demonstrate mastery of a standard in itslearning.

[Student Facing View of online content 2](#): This example shows how students practice and demonstrate mastery of a standard in itslearning.

📌 [Sample opportunity for peer collaboration](#): Students from Clear Lake discuss their opportunities for peer collaboration during personalized station work.

[Student describes using learning data](#): Student at Clear Lake describes how she reflects on her learning data to determine what station activities she will work on.

[Student describes using learning data](#): Student at Clear Lake describes how he uses a data folder with learning data to determine which activities he will work on to master specific TEKS.

[Student describes using learning data](#): A kindergarten student at Clear Lake explains using a tally sheet to track how many visits she makes to each station. Once she has visited a station 10 times, she is required to work at other stations.

[Student describes using learning data](#): Students at Clear Lake choose the space in which they think they can learn best.

[Student describes using learning data](#): Students at Clear Lake describe how they are empowered to choose station activities that are purposeful to match what they need to work on.

[Sample Lower Grade Reading Menu](#): This sample reading menu is used during station rotation time in a lower-grade classroom.

[Sample Upper Grade Reading Menu](#): This sample reading menu is used during station rotation time in an upper-grade classroom.

[Sample Weekly Lesson Plan](#): This sample lesson plan demonstrates the typical level of detail in teachers' lesson plans.

[Photo of Small Group Instruction](#): Photograph of teacher providing timely support in a small group.

## Assessment Artifacts

Element	Artifact
Multiple Data Sources	<p><a href="#">"I Can" Statement Trackers</a>: Students use "I Can" Statement Trackers to identify standards based on district benchmarks and common assessments. Students use their trackers to choose station activities that allow them to practice standards they need extra support on.</p> <p><a href="#">Teachers describe personalization of station work</a>: Teachers at Clear Lake describe their processes for personalizing station work and determining instructional modalities for specific learning needs and desired outcomes.</p> <p><a href="#">Tracking progress on pre/post tests</a>: A teacher at Clear Lake describes how students use a data binder of 5th grade TEKS to track progress on pre/post tests, understand their learning objectives, and make informed decisions about learning activities.</p> <p><a href="#">Establishing a Strong Data Culture</a>: The principal of Clear Lake explains the critical importance of establishing a strong data culture, which involves teachers and instructional leaders building new routines and practicing them with regularity.</p> <p>► <a href="#">Shifts in the way that teachers use data</a>: The district's project manager on the type of data that teachers need to personalize for students.</p>
Multiple Opportunities to Demonstrate Mastery	<p><a href="#">Teachers Track Learning Progressions</a>: This is a sample of a tracker that teachers complete to track learning progressions.</p> <p><a href="#">Teachers Track Learning Progressions</a>: This is a sample of a tracker that teachers complete to track learning progressions. Some teachers track this digitally, but this sample demonstrates how the same information can be tracked without technology.</p> <p><a href="#">District Norms for BAS Assessment</a>: This reading assessment was used in primarily the same way both before and after the pilot launched. The data informs Guided Reading groups and the instruction for that group.</p> <p><a href="#">Sample DNC Assessment</a>: This math assessment (DNC) data informs flexible instructional groupings for math.</p> <p>► <a href="#">Teachers describes using multiple sources of data</a>: Teachers at Clear Lake describe their processes for tracking data with students and how the teacher uses the data to personalize for students' needs.</p>
Transparency in Learning	<p><a href="#">Parent Version</a>: The parent-facing version of the learning progressions for kindergarten are given to families at the beginning of the year in order to help families use the learning progression language with their students at home.</p> <p><a href="#">Teacher Assessment Guide for Progressions</a>: The assessment guide ensures that teachers across the district assess student mastery of learning progressions consistently from classroom to classroom and school to school.</p>
Continuing to Refine the Feedback Cycle	<p><a href="#">Sample Exit Ticket Organization</a>: This sample shows how online formative assessments are organization on the district's LMS.</p> <p><a href="#">Sample Formative Assessment</a>: This sample of a lower elementary formative assessment is structured so that it can be used multiple times.</p>

► <https://youtu.be/82f5LSfY7ig>

► [https://youtu.be/FE81pc\\_Hlto](https://youtu.be/FE81pc_Hlto)



[www.RaiseYourHandTexas.org](http://www.RaiseYourHandTexas.org)