



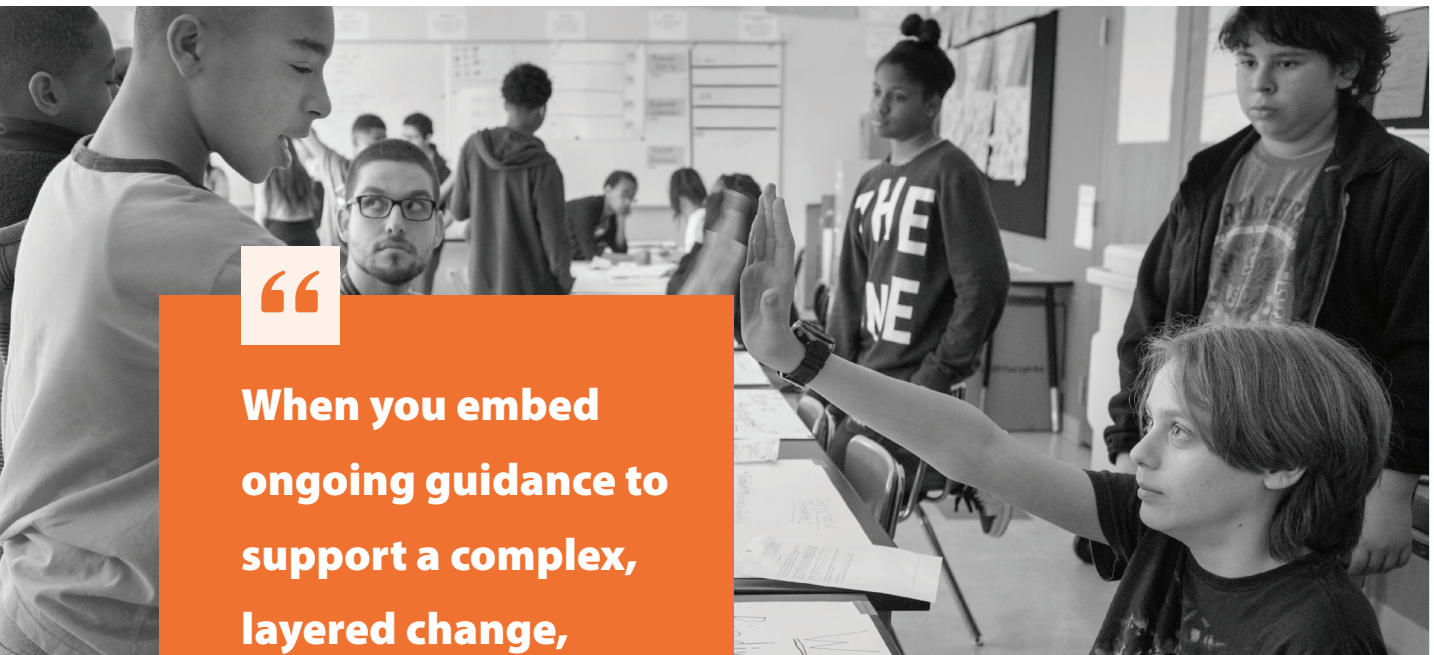
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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2024 Spotlight on  
South Carolina

# Summing Up a Snapshot of Competency-Based Lessons Learned

The report *A Competency-Based Blueprint for Supporting Statewide Learning* charts five years and counting since reDesign began formally collaborating with the South Carolina Department of Education Personalized Learning Team to design, develop, and implement the K-12 competency-based framework for learning across the state. In the year prior, stakeholder engagement, planning, and design meetings between reDesign and key partners resulted in the development of the **Profile of the South Carolina Graduate (PSCG) Competencies**, which were intended to serve as an aligned framework to support learning and assessment for the unique elements of the PSCG. What followed the official release of the *PSCG Competencies* was a strategic, multi-year, state-wide effort to put the *PSCG Competencies* into action. At the heart of this effort was a commitment to strengthen and scale personalized instruction, measure growth using the newly developed progression-based competencies, and provide more equitable support to learners across diverse school and district settings. The following five key features characterized South Carolina's bold move towards integrating personalized, competency-based learning (PCBL) throughout the state.



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**When you embed ongoing guidance to support a complex, layered change,**

it gives educators a starting point - and a middle point of building from initial attempts to integrate competencies into curriculum, and a transition point where they are able to work towards greater implementation independence.”

## **South Carolina's approach**

emphasized providing personalized support options that schools/districts could opt into based on their needs, including intensive coaching, workshops/convenings, online courses, and implementation resources.

## 1

## The design of a competency framework to address a defined challenge: How do we make our Profile of the Graduate more than a classroom poster?



Align your solution with an agreed-upon problem.

In early stakeholder engagement meetings, it became clear that there was widespread support for the vision articulated in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate, and a strong desire to move from vision to action. What was unclear—the agreed upon problem—was how to make that move. As we began developing early messaging about the forthcoming competencies, we noticed immediate resonance among stakeholders when describing the primary purpose of the competencies as making their profile “actionable,” and “not just a poster on the wall.” At the guidance of the Personalized Learning Team, it was decided that we would name the framework the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate Competencies* in order to concretize the connection between the **Profile of the South Carolina Graduate** and putting them into action through competency implementation. In this way, the state’s new competencies were not introduced as a framework in competition with the state’s academic standards, but rather as an important companion framework to work alongside standards that would translate the PSCG vision into stable, common “ground zero” language for learning, assessment, and growth measurement. As a result, over and over again, implementers told us that the competencies enhanced existing practice and helped them make the strategies and steps behind key skill development increasingly visible to their students.

Explore the **Profile of the South Carolina Graduate Competencies** that gave us a framework to hang equitable, student-centered instruction on, across grade levels and subject areas.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2

#### **High-quality, sustained, personalized coaching.**



For us, meaningful and impactful capacity-building meant working shoulder-to-shoulder with practitioners—and staying beside them through the learning curve—as part of our multifaceted support offerings.

Across all of data collected since 2020, the most uniformly positive outcomes with the highest affirmative ratings were in relation to the coaching provided to educators and leaders as part of reDesign's Intensive Support Program in participating K-12 schools. When you embed ongoing guidance to support a complex, layered change, it gives educators a safe starting point, and a runway to advance beyond initial attempts to integrate competencies into curriculum and move towards greater implementation independence.



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**My coach has been my  
sounding board and  
unwavering supporter for  
the past two years.**

I wouldn't have made it this far  
without her guidance and support.  
Her coaching support has been  
priceless!”

- EDUCATOR



## 3

### **An invitation, rather than a mandate, to engage in the transformation effort.**



Rather than mandate PSCG Competency implementation, participants were invited to opt in to the level of implementation support they needed and wanted—which in turn enabled us to meet schools and districts where they were at in their own journey.

South Carolina's approach was driven by a common vision for creating equitable access to personalized competency development for their K-12 learners, as well as a change leadership approach that valued:



#### **MODELING PERSONALIZED SUPPORT**

Creating the ability for districts, schools, and teachers to choose the entry point and pathway forward that worked for them, on an opt-in basis



#### **SUSTAINING ADULT CAPACITY-BUILDING**

Providing intensive, ongoing coaching at the teacher and leader level, as well as workshops, fellowship cohorts, online courses, and implementation resources

The learner-centered, personalized approach modeled by the PersonalizeSC team at the state department is noteworthy. While working to support and scale personalized learning across the state, they created opportunities for schools and districts to personalize their own pathways of transformation. Specifically, they provided districts and schools with the opportunity to choose from among options for supporting implementation and



professional learning at various levels of intensity, and through a range of modalities—from intensive job-embedded coaching programs, to self-paced, virtual learning modules. They also prioritized building resources in sync with emerging needs, rather than mandating a predetermined series of directives. Schools that participated in the Intensive Support Program—which included two years of early adopter, job-embedded coaching—played a special role in helping to co-design learning tools and implementation supports over time, based on co-creation of their own pathways towards PCBL outcomes.

To further explore our change leadership approach, explore our brief **“From Shared Purpose to Learner Impact”**, which illustrates how South Carolina enacted a shift towards competency development in partnership with reDesign.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 4

#### **Embedded action research not only to learn, improve, and measure our success – but to help equip our partners to do the same.**



Our team's goal was to work with SC state leaders, district officials, school leaders, coaches, counselors, and teachers to build their capacity to continue to support instructional growth and conduct their own assessments of learning and development, at every level of the system.

We approached learning and continuous improvement as ongoing and integral to implementation by embedding action research cycles, and codifying research design tools and resources as we built them. Our support structures and change initiatives were also characterized by:



#### **CAPTURING AUTHENTIC PRACTICE**

Fostering regular opportunities for sharing outcomes and examples of shifts in instruction and assessment within and across schools and roles



#### **DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS**

Curating the structures, tools, and processes that districts can utilize to implement personalized, competency-based approaches for years to come

As a way to foster ongoing collective learning, we jointly hosted regular convenings where practitioners showcased their work, created yearly summations of the implementation journey, engaged in ongoing survey data collection, and built a resource catalog of



resources, tools, and adaptation guidelines. These were all essential components of a long-term vision for sustained transformation and continuous improvement. For leaders, their learning included customized professional learning to explore competency-based tools, shadowing reDesign coaches, and receiving one-on-one coaching themselves as part of that thought partnership.

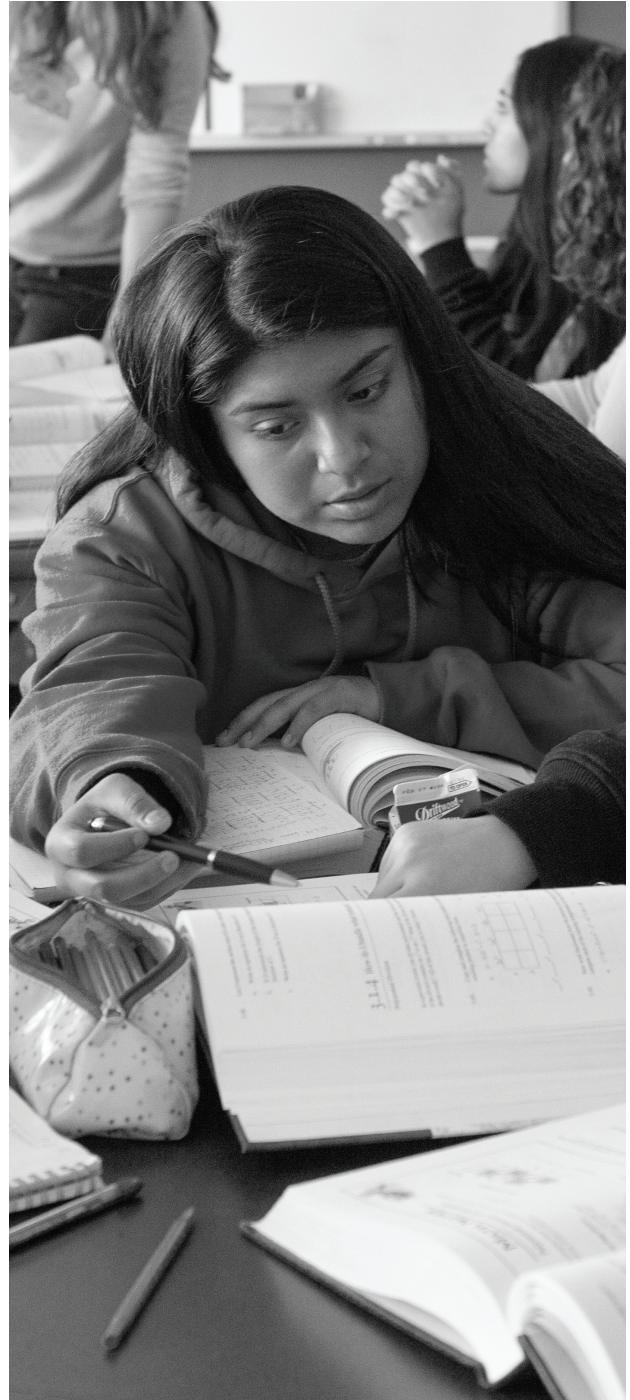
Learn more about how to carry out personalized, competency-based learning tied to the framework in our **District Guide** and **Adaptation Guide**.

## 5

**A commitment to center learners' experiences, needs, and perspectives all along the way.**

There's no better way to discover how to carry out PCBL than to start with a solid foundation, but then learn from direct engagement from stakeholders and listen to input from participants, building what they need as you go.

Our team recognized that if we were going to build educator and system-level capacity to support students' competencies, we needed to bring focus, expertise, and direction to the table while using feedback to continually improve our own support resources. Our primary indicators of success were an increase in agency, engagement and competency, which allowed us to center the learner experience within the context of identifying key skills, making meaning out of them, and applying them to content instruction. South Carolina also included attention to collecting evidence of how well adult and K-12 learners felt supported, had a sense of belonging, and were able to develop self-efficacy, while emphasizing growth and effort within a mastery orientation. Those indicators formed the focus of our data collection, in thinking about the environment for change as well as differences pre-PCBL as compared to post-implementation. Ultimately, we found that when educators felt empowered to try out a different approach and were equipped with specific strategies for doing so, as well as a voice within the process, their students felt empowered too.





# Exploring the Report

The **complete retrospective report** provides an overview of how we got from **1)** considering the evidence behind competency-based learning approaches, to **2)** selecting the specific skill sets that South Carolina would focus on in alignment with their Profile, **3)** implementing Intensive Support/coaching, a Fellows program, and workshops/convenings, and **4)** analyzing survey input, case examples, and implementation artifacts, and **5)** ultimately creating a set of support resources for future implementation beneficiaries. Because this change effort was intentionally and meticulously documented, it provides us with a clear pathway for other districts and states to adapt and follow.

✓ The representative data analysis within the report illustrates the impact of varied implementation support options and evolving resources on educator and student participants. It reflects participation in these key areas of design, development, and partnership:

<div>COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK</div> <div>Developed a robust competency framework aligned with South Carolina's Profile of a Graduate, providing a clear roadmap for educators.</div>	<div>INTENSIVE SUPPORT</div> <div>Offered ongoing coaching and support within and across schools and districts, empowering educators to implement competency-based learning effectively.</div>
<div>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT</div> <div>Created a fellowship program for education leaders and coaches, building capacity and expertise in competency-based learning systems.</div>	<div>RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT</div> <div>Developed practical resources, including a guide to measuring personalized, competency-based learning, equipping educators with the necessary tools.</div>

## Key findings

### — across these areas of support include:



#### SOUTH CAROLINA BY THE NUMBERS

In partnership with reDesign and other stakeholders, the South Carolina Department of Education Personalized Learning Team was able to grow their impact across the state **from reaching 38 schools and district offices in 2017-18 to an impressive 191 participants in 2023-24**. The participation data also illustrates how providing pathways for support at varied levels of intensity allowed schools to plug into a menu of options as needed, determine what they needed next after an initial engagement, or even double and triple up on types of support over the course of multiple semesters or school years. Schools and districts that engaged at that level of intensity unsurprisingly had the most opportunity to bring in educators across different roles, grade-levels, and subject-areas in ways that made sense given their position and current level of capacity.



#### EDUCATOR & STUDENT SURVEY SYNTHESIS

Within educator data, a few themes emerged. First, by focusing on supporting PCBL and dedicating time to it, educators naturally made leaps in their conceptual understanding, aligned instructional strategies, and ways of measuring progress. For example, educators at one school site went from **rating their understanding of the PSCG competencies on a scale of 1-5 at a 1.75 in Fall 2023 to 4.5 at the end of Spring 2024**. In addition, the specific competencies their teachers focused on also had an immediate impact on where students grew - in one elementary classroom that gave particular focus to the “learn independently” competency along with “reading critically”, **gains were seen in agency-indicators, with students going from 29% agreement the statement that “I can help make decisions about what and how I learn based on my interests and needs” in the fall, jumping to 59% of students agreement in the spring**. We also see multiple years of strongly positive impressions of their learning experiences from students within participating sites on the whole, reporting nearly universal agreement with indicators around teacher relationships and opportunities for them to gain help and support as needed.

Across the data, areas of continued growth include designing learning experiences that center students’ competency development and **more consistently engage them** in the curriculum and associated decision-making around their learning. We can also see that once educators were equipped with resources like the Measuring PCBL Toolkit, which addressed their expressed need for support measuring competency development, they felt more confident than prior years in gauging their impact, and involved students more deeply in that process. In earlier years, students also noted that there were some, but less consistent opportunities to celebrate, pause, and reflect on their progress. But in 2023-24, depending on the site and grade-level context, **we see a range of 74-94% of students reporting that they feel confident using competency-based learning tools** for purposes like monitoring their growth over time and reflection.

Our Fellows program was another way for leaders, coaches, district staff, and state leaders to engage together in growing their capacity-building, allowing for deep dives into a collection of support resources and **insights shared between leaders and teachers**, helping to scale and spread the effort.

# Key findings

— across these areas of support include:



### COACHING SURVEY SYNTHESIS

Ongoing feedback about our Intensive Support coaching program serves as some of the most robust evidence to date that this model of ongoing, responsive coaching makes a difference in fast tracking implementation success and contributing to educators' sense of self-efficacy around PCBL. In 2023-24, we see **feedback ratings ranging from 4.9-5 on a scale to 1-5** when gauging items related to the coach-teacher relationship and their focus on equitable practices. Notably, school, district, and school leaders also received coaching and thought partnership, providing opportunities to navigate challenges like COVID-era implementation and integrate systemic change with classroom level shifts in teaching and learning.



### CASE EXAMPLES IN ACTION

Educators reported finding **enjoyment/affirmation, authentic state/network-wide, coach/partner, school-level connections, and increased competency development** as they grew in their understanding of the *PSCG Competencies* and the practices that would best foster their integration while giving students equitable access to high-quality learning experiences and meaningful skill development. As you read through each story, note the learner voices and testimonies throughout, whether the learners are adults or K-12 students. One of the clearest outcomes was the **increased visibility around the skills being elevated within the curriculum**, linked to a growth mindset/mastery orientation and being an active, reflective participant in either professional learning or classroom instruction.



### KEY FINDINGS: DETAILED RECAP

We recap takeaways from our key findings in more detail in the **Trends & Learning** section in the **complete report**.





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**reDesign** is a nationally-recognized, women-led education design organization that partners with change makers to ensure every learner has access to deep and meaningful learning that supports their academic, career, and personal development. With expertise in change leadership, learner-centered practices, capacity-building, and future of learning design, reDesign is dedicated to advancing Competency-Based Learning (CBL).



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For a collection of multimedia resources that serve as a companion to this report, visit  
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