

2026–27 ALN THEME
Designing and Implementing Competency-Based Assessment Systems



2026–2027 Session Schedule

DESIGNED FOR:

Everyone—teachers, district teams, ISDs, and assessment facilitators. SCECHs will be offered for each session.

COST:

ALN 2026–2027 Season Pass = \$315.00
Single session (in person) = \$100
Single session (webinar) = \$50

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE:

September 30, 2026	Foundations of Competency-Based Education Virgel Hammonds
November 11, 2026	Formative Assessment as the Engine of Learning MAC leaders
January 27, 2027	Rethinking Summative Assessment & Performance Assessment Karin Hess
March 16, 2027	Grading, Reporting, and Demonstrating Learning Matt Townsley
May 5, 2027	Practitioner Stories: Practice, Progress, and Possibility Participant implementation stories

The September and May events will be held in person and will include a networking luncheon. November, January, and March will be webinars.

FRAMING QUESTIONS:

- How do we move from coverage and compliance to learning and student agency—shifting from grading tasks to gathering meaningful evidence of what students know and can do?
- How do students demonstrate mastery of competencies to then move along their learning trajectory?
- How might competency-based assessment practices and systems develop agency in all students

REGISTER:

ALN 2026–2027
Season Pass
qr.link/MAoyR5



ALN 2026–2027
Series—individual
qr.link/5bqRJ3





SESSION 1

Foundations of Competency-Based Education

Virgel Hammonds

September 30, 2026

9:30 am – 2:30 pm (includes luncheon)

University Club of MSU, Lansing, MI

Register:

qr.link/5bqRJ3

What do we mean by “competency,” and what does it require of educators?

This in-person session lays the foundation for the 2026-27 ALN series by exploring the core principles of competency-based education and how they differ from traditional and standards-based approaches. Participants will examine the role of durable skills, learning progressions, and student agency, while considering the instructional shifts needed to support deeper learning.

Framing Questions:

1. What does it really mean for a student to be “competent,” and how would we know?
2. How does competency-based education shift the purpose of assessment—from measuring learning to driving it?
3. What changes for us as educators when learning—not time or tasks—becomes the constant?



SESSION 2

Formative Assessment as the Engine of Learning

MAC leaders



November 11, 2026

9:00 – 11:30 am

Webinar

Register:

qr.link/5bqRJ3

If competency is the goal, formative assessment is the pathway.

In a competency-based system, formative assessment is not a strategy; rather, it is the engine that drives learning forward. This virtual session explores how educators can intentionally elicit, interpret, and respond to evidence of student thinking to support progress toward competency.

Participants will examine the role of feedback, self-assessment, learning progressions, and performance assessment in building student ownership and increasing rigor through thinking—not just task completion. Particular attention will be given to how authentic and performance-based opportunities can serve as rich sources of formative evidence, helping educators and students better understand learning in progress rather than simply judging learning at the end. Practical routines and tools will be shared to support immediate classroom applications.

Framing Questions:

1. If competency is the goal, what kinds of evidence do educators need to gather during learning—not just at the end of learning?
2. How can formative assessment and performance assessment work together to provide richer evidence of student thinking, transfer, and application?
3. How can formative assessment practices shift classrooms from task completion and compliance toward deeper thinking, ownership, and continuous growth?
4. In what ways can feedback, self-assessment, and learning progressions help students better understand where they are in their learning, where they are going, and how to move forward?



SESSION 3

Rethinking Summative Assessment & Performance Assessment

Karin Hess

January 27, 2027

9:00 – 11:30 am

Webinar

Register:

qr.link/5bqRJ3

What counts as evidence of learning, and how do we know when students are competent?

This virtual session focuses on the role of summative assessment within a competency-based system, with a particular emphasis on performance assessment. Participants will explore how authentic, application-based tasks can provide defensible evidence of student learning aligned to competencies.

Participants will unpack the characteristics of high-quality performance assessments, including alignment, rigor, and opportunities for revision, while connecting to Components of an Equitable Assessment System (CEAS) such as authentic and student-driven assessment.

Framing Questions:

1. What types of classroom evidence best demonstrate that students can apply, transfer, and use their learning in meaningful ways?
2. How can performance assessments create opportunities for students to demonstrate deeper understanding, transfer, and authentic application of learning?
3. What design features help ensure that performance assessments are rigorous, equitable, and supportive of student ownership and agency? student learning and literacy development in social studies?



SESSION 4

Grading, Reporting, and Demonstrating Learning

Matt Townsley

March 16, 2027

9:00 – 11:30 am

Webinar

Register:

qr.link/5bqRJ3

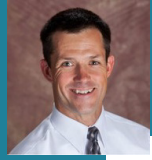
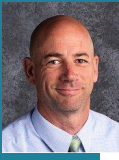
How do we communicate learning in ways that are accurate, meaningful, and actionable?

Shifting to competency-based education requires rethinking traditional grading and reporting practices. In this virtual session, participants will explore approaches to communicating student learning through competency-based grading, portfolios, capstones, and demonstrations of learning.

We will examine key tensions, including progress vs. proficiency and academic achievement vs. behaviors, and consider how reporting structures can better reflect what students know and can do.

Framing Questions:

1. How can grading and reporting practices more accurately communicate what students know, understand, and are able to do?
2. What tensions emerge when shifting from traditional grading practices toward competency-based approaches, and how might schools navigate them?
3. In what ways can portfolios, capstones, and demonstrations of learning provide more meaningful and actionable evidence for students, educators, and families? What resources are available to support my continuing professional growth and that of my colleagues?



SESSION 5

Practitioner Stories: Practice, Progress, and Possibility Participant Implementation Stories

May 5, 2027

9:30 am – 2:30 pm (includes luncheon)

University Club of MSU, Lansing, MI

Register:

qr.link/5bqRJ3

The 2026–27 ALN sessions focus on competency-based assessment systems that center student agency, deeper learning, and high-quality evidence. But what does this look like in real classrooms, schools, and systems?

In this final in-person session, participants will learn from districts and educators actively engaged in creating competency-based assessment systems. Through implementation stories, we will explore what it looks like to build competency-based systems over time—what's working, where challenges persist, and how teams are navigating the journey.

Participants will reflect on their own context, identify areas of strength and growth, and consider next steps for continued implementation.