Welcome to the 5th annual New England Secondary School Consortium High School Redesign Conference!

As an educator or policy maker, you know the importance of providing a quality education to every student having devoted your professional life to accomplish this reality. For those students with us, you live this need every day. And across the country, almost everyone agrees: ensuring a richer and deeper education is paramount to our success both as individuals and members of local communities.

In the midst of numerous efforts to rethink learning in America, the NESSC High School Redesign Conference has grown in size from an initial gathering of 200 educators from five states to over 650 educators from 15 states across the country. What is happening here?

I think there are three keys to this success. First, and fundamentally important, the NESSC is a partnership that operates on the multiple levels of practice, state policy, and increasing public will and understanding. Dedicated educators involved in the NESSC’s League of Innovative Schools cannot undertake such significant work alone. They need the support and protection of aligned state policy and the understanding and support of our community members. The collaborative efforts of the state education agencies in Vermont, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine and Connecticut have made great strides to ensure this broader support.

Second, the intention of the NESSC is clear and simple: personalize learning through the creation of structures and processes that enable and require students to demonstrate learning; involve students in the creation of multiple and flexible pathways to achieve these learning standards; and, establish school accountability systems that provide actionable data for teachers and the public.

Finally, this conference is distinguished by its emphasis on learning from and with practitioners. You create new strategies on a daily basis to increase learning for students. You understand the various struggles faced by today’s youth. You understand the world students will enter upon graduation and work tirelessly to ensure they are successful when they do. It only makes sense that you have much to share with each other. This conference is built upon this idea, focusing on educators sharing ideas—successes and failures—with each other.

We are thrilled that you have decided to join our conference knowing full well that professional development time and resources are limited. With over 50 concurrent breakout sessions to choose from featuring the work of schools across the NESSC, we hope you find ideas, affirm your commitment, discover new Twitter accounts to follow, and leave with a clearer set of strategies to implement in your setting.

Speaking for all of us in the NESSC, I look forward to hearing your ideas, being challenged by your thinking, and finding ways we can continue to support the good work underway across New England.

Enjoy the conference!

David J. Ruff
Executive Director, Great Schools Partnership
AGENDA

Thursday, March 20

7:30 a.m.  Registration – Foyer
8:30 a.m.  Pre-Conference Sessions (Pre-registration required)
11:30 a.m. Lunch on your own
1:00 p.m.  Plenary Session: Re-affirming Our Commitment to Personalized Learning and Voices From Our Schools – Tiffany Ballroom

2:15 p.m.  1 Concurrent Sessions (9 sessions)
3:30 p.m.  Break – Break Stations (1st + 2nd floors)
3:45 p.m.  2 Concurrent Sessions (10 sessions)
5:00 p.m.  Hors d’oeuvres and Special performance by Cabot School student band, The Limes! – Foyer
5:45 p.m.  Networking
  * Special Student Networking Session – Essex/Lennox Room
  * Educator Networking – Foyer
7:00 p.m.  Dinner on your own
8:00 p.m.  #NESSC14 / #EdChatME: Twitter Chat – Essex/Lennox Room

Friday, March 21

7:00 a.m.  Continental Breakfast – Ballroom Terrace + Foyer
8:15 a.m.  Plenary Session: Student Voice in the Learning Process – Tiffany Ballroom
9:15 a.m.  3 Concurrent Sessions (10 sessions)
10:30 a.m. Break – Break Stations (1st + 2nd floors)
10:45 a.m.  4 Concurrent Sessions (10 sessions)
12:00 p.m. Lunch and NESSC Awards Ceremony – Tiffany Ballroom + Foyer
1:15 p.m.  5 Concurrent Sessions (9 sessions)
2:30 p.m.  Adjournment (no closing ceremony)

#NESSC14
### Concurrent Sessions Schedule

#### Thursday, March 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROOM</th>
<th>SESSION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified: Effective Unit Design [NESSC]</td>
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<table>
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##### Room 5: 1:15 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

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Response to Instruction + Intervention: What It Is and How We Do It

Secondary schools are becoming more intentional about building a culture of instructional supports and academic interventions that serve all students who need them. The aim of this session is to develop some shared understandings about the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) framework as it applies to high schools. We will explore three tiers of supports and interventions – beginning with the role and tasks of “teacher as first responder”, then examine the key features of effective, equitable, and systemic Tier 2 and Tier 3 school-wide interventions beyond the classroom.

Along the way, participants will have opportunities to:

• assess the current status of their RtII initiatives;
• consider the connections between quality interventions, the use of data, the establishment of an RtII team, and the development of a coherent case management system;
• think about intervention practices that they want to stop, start, deepen, or change; and
• discuss “how-to’s” for developing, implementing, and sustaining effective intervention practices.

PRESENTER: Carol Miller Lieber (senior consultant, Educators for Social Responsibility)

CONTACT: Carol Miller Lieber | carolmlieber@esrnational.org

Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified

In this workshop, participants will learn about the fundamental components of an effective proficiency-based teaching and learning system, learn about an array of resources that can support their work, and begin to develop a plan that addresses policies, practices, and community-engagement activities that will lead to the successful implementation of proficiency-based learning.

PRESENTERS: Mary Hastings (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Ken Templeton (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Angela Hardy (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Jean Haeger (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)

CONTACT: Ken Templeton | ktempleton@greatschoolspartnership.org

How to Talk About School Improvement: What You Need to Know

In this presentation, participants will learn a variety of effective communication strategies that will work in any school or situation, including the construction of a compelling narrative, the power of specific examples, and the use of language that speaks to the core values of parents and community members. Specific examples and case studies will be used to illustrate the power of effective communications, including one Maine high school's journey from low-performing rural school to a national model of personalized learning. Participants will also receive a brief introduction to the Glossary of Education Reform, a new online resource created by the Great Schools Partnership, and discuss how the glossary can help participants improve understanding of complex school-improvement concepts in their communities.

PRESENTERS: Stephen Abbott (director of communications, Great Schools Partnership), Pam Fisher (senior advisor, Great Schools Partnership)

CONTACT: Stephen Abbott | sabbott@greatschoolspartnership.org

League of Innovative Schools State Networking Meetings

These state-specific meetings are for current League members only, and will focus on regional and statewide activities, updates on grants and initiatives, and the sharing of new League tools and resources.
Plenary Sessions

Re-affirming Our Commitment to Personalized Learning and Voices From Our Schools

Conference welcome, overview of the NESSC, and stories from schools across the League of Innovative Schools.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 1:00 pm
PRESENTERS: Mark Kostin (associate director, Great Schools Partnership) Dianna Roberger-Wentzell (chief academic officer, Connecticut State Department of Education), Sharon Lee (director, office of multiple pathways, Rhode Island Department of Education), Julie Vargas (High School in the Community, CT), Logan Eaton (Deer Isle-Stonington HS, ME), Shaun Davis (MC2, NH), Evelyn Cante (Central Falls High School, RI), Robin Kuhns (Mount Abraham Union Middle/High School, VT)
CONTACT: Mark Kostin | mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org

What I Need: Student Voice in the Learning Process

Hear directly from students about what personalization means to them. Students will share their thoughts on what they need to be successful in and out of the classroom. Students from across the NESSC will share their experiences and respond to questions from conference participants.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 8:15 am
PRESENTERS: Jon Ingram (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Ken Templeton (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Jon Ingram | jingram@greatschoolspartnership.org

Celebrating the NESSC: Accomplishments and Recognitions

Join us as we briefly highlight some of the most significant accomplishments of the year and formally recognize a number of individuals who’s tireless efforts are instrumental to the success of collective work.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 12:30 pm
PRESENTERS: John Fischer (deputy commissioner, Vermont Agency of Education), Paul Leather (deputy commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Education), Sharon Lee (director, office of multiple pathways, Rhode Island Department of Education), Dianna Roberger-Wentzell (chief academic officer, Connecticut State Department of Education), David Ruff (executive director, Great Schools Partnership), Rachelle Tomes (chief academic officer, Maine Department of Education),
CONTACT: David Ruff | druff@greatschoolspartnership.org

Concurrent Sessions

Connecticut

A Mastery-Based Lesson on Mastery-Based Learning
High School in the Community, New Haven, CT

In this session, presenters will describe how High School in the Community has advanced mastery-based learning to help all students take more responsibility over their own education, while they also address skill deficits, acquire college- and career-ready skills, and excel in their areas of interest. To make the session more resonant and authentic for participants, it will be structured as a mastery-based lesson! So whether you have never heard of mastery-based learning, or whether
you already changing practices in your school or classroom, our mastery-based approach will both broaden and deepen your understanding.

**SESSION:** Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am + 10:45 am  
**PRESENTERS:** Erik Good (building leader), Gail Emilsson (teacher), Adeline Marzialo (teacher), Julie Vargas (student)  
**CONTACT:** Gail Emilsson | gail.emillson@new-haven.k12.ct.us  
www.highschoolinthecommunity.org

How Personalized Learning Changed Our Practice and Our Students  
*Naugatuck High School, Naugatuck, CT*

What does personalized learning look like? At the start of Naugatuck High School’s journey, personalization meant meeting everyone’s needs. It meant shifting our instructional philosophy to embrace learning as the constant and time as the variable. It also challenged what we knew about instruction, causing us to reexamine our practices. Our faculty sought out more creative ways to manage our classrooms to support students whose educational journeys might take more time—or less time—than others. Personalization not only transformed learning for our students, it also transformed us as teachers, mentors, and leaders. In this session, participants will learn about our new instructional practices, how we have evolved as educators, and what the implications are for student learning. The presenters will share their vision for a personalized classroom and how they were able to achieve it. They will also share curriculum and assessment tools that helped shape instructional practice, as well as student video interviews, written survey data, and student work that reveals how students have responded to the changes.

**SESSION:** Thursday, March 20 | 2:15 pm + 3:45 pm  
**PRESENTERS:** Caroline Messenger (teacher), Marc Pardee (teacher)  
**CONTACT:** Jan Saam | saamj@naugy.net  
www.naugatuckhigh.naugatuck.k12.ct.us

Foundational Transformation: A Springboard to Competency-Based Learning  
*Windsor Locks High School, Windsor Locks, CT*

Beginning in 2011, Windsor Locks High School, along with other schools in its underperforming Connecticut school district, began a journey of transformation driven by the characteristics of high-performing schools identified by research. The presenters will share their past, present, and future plans, which will help other school districts rethink their culture, belief systems, and approaches to teaching and learning. The presenters will also discuss how, in just three years, the district’s systemic, strategic changes have resulted in a new and rigorous curriculum, a shared educational vision, improved student achievement, and greater faculty satisfaction. Most importantly, participants will learn how these three foundational years are serving as a springboard for the process currently underway to both design and implement a competency-based educational system.

**SESSION:** Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am + 1:15 pm  
**PRESENTERS:** Susan A. Bell (assistant superintendent), Sharon M. Cournoyer (principal), Wayne C. Sweeney (superintendent of schools)  
**CONTACT:** Susan Bell | sbell@wlps.org  
www.wlps.org

Maine

Focused Learning: Ellsworth High School’s Response to Intervention  
*Ellsworth High School, Ellsworth, Maine*

In this interactive presentation, faculty from Ellsworth High School will describe the development, design, and implementation of its teacher-developed Response to Intervention program called Focused Learning—an integrated, dynamic, technology-assisted program that addresses the learning needs of every student through a combination of intervention, extension, and enrichment opportunities. Each day during second period, 500 students move to their interventions, extensions,
enrichments, or study halls based on their distinct learning needs. The school’s flexible scheduling model is managed through a teacher-designed app that lets the staff “tag” students in a targeted and timely manner, using a prioritized content-area schedule that allows for an even distribution of students across each content area throughout the week. While this initiative is still in its early stages, the Ellsworth High School teaching faculty are excited to share the development process, management of the program, qualitative and quantitative data, and the personal experiences of teachers and students. A Q&A will follow.

**SESSION:** Friday, March 21 | 10:45 am + 1:15 pm

**PRESENTERS:** Tristian Bates (teacher), Jonathan Bender (teacher), Jessie Falabella (teacher), Tracey Hollingsworth (teacher), Lydia Kinney (teacher)

**CONTACT:** Focused Learning Team | ehsfocusedlearning@rsu24.org

www.ehsfocusedlearning.blogspot.com

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**Agents of Their Own Learning: A District’s Proficiency-Based System Enters Maturity**

Regional School Unit 2, Hallowell, ME

Regional School Unit 2 has been implementing K–12 proficiency-based learning for several years now. Join the presenters as they describe how their model has given students significant amounts of voice and choice in their learning. In the district’s three high schools, students have authentic opportunities to design their own learning pathways, learn at their own pace, and engage in learning experiences that not only match their interests, but that build upon the resources and opportunities that exist in the wider community. In this session, participants will learn about the structure, schedule, and other design elements that have empowered the district to dramatically increase personalization for students without watering down standards.

**SESSION:** Thursday, March 20 | 2:15 pm + 3:45 pm

**PRESENTERS:** Rick Amero (principal, Monmouth Academy), John Armentrout (director, information technology), Christine Arsenault (teacher, Monmouth Academy), Brenda Dalbeck (teacher, Hall-Dale High School), Virgel Hammonds (superintendent), Libby Ladner (teacher, Hall-Dale Middle School), Steve Lavoie (principal, Richmond High School), Eric Palleschi (teacher, Monmouth Middle School), Megan Rounds (teacher, Richmond High School), Matt Shea (coordinator of student achievement), Mark Tinkham (principal, Hall-Dale Middle/High School), Charlie Urquhart (teacher, Richmond High School)

**CONTACT:** Virgel Hammonds | vhammonds@kidsrsu.org

www.kidsrsu.org

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**Easy Come, Easy Go: Maintaining and Sustaining Standards-Based Practices**

Troy Howard Middle School, Belfast, ME

Each year, the Troy Howard Middle School staff holds a four-day workshop series called “Standards-Based Education in Action” as a way to ensure the continuation of practices that have improved student achievement in our school. Teachers new to Troy Howard join visiting teachers from other schools to learn about “how we do business” from veteran faculty and students. Each session involves direct instruction from multiple teachers and students, as well as classroom observations and demonstrations of teaching principles in action. Participants will learn about this unique professional-development program and walk away with a breakdown of the learning targets for each of the four days.

**SESSION:** Thursday, March 20 | 3:45 pm + Friday, March 21 | 10:45 am

**PRESENTERS:** Bruce Bailey (assistant principal), Kim Buckheit (principal), Sandy Flacke (special education coordinator), Chris LaValle (social-studies teacher)

**CONTACT:** Kim Buckheit | kbuckheit@rsu20.org

thms.rsu20.org

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**Making Learning Constant: An Integrated Approach to CCSS-Driven Mathematics**

Westbrook High School, Westbrook, ME

Westbrook High School began its journey to become a proficiency-based high school starting in the math department, and department chair Jeff Guerette and sophomore math-team teacher Will Leque are working at the forefront of proficiency-based math instruction. In this workshop, participants will learn how Westbrook High School developed an integrated, proficiency-based math program in which learning is constant and time is the variable. Classroom procedures and systems
will be discussed along with the opportunities and challenges inherent in putting students at the center of learning.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 2:15 pm + Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am
PRESENTERS: Rhonda Fortin (mathematics instructional coach, grades 5–12), Jeff Guerrette (mathematics department chair), Will Leque (mathematics teacher)
CONTACT: Jeff Guerrette | guerettej@westbrookschools.org
westbrookschools.org

New Hampshire

3 4 Student Leadership in Creating a Dynamic High School
Hillsboro-Deering High School, Hillsboro, NH

During the transitional years of high school, every student must learn to become a productive member of our diverse and magnificent society. For this reason, student leadership and voice are critical, and character needs to be developed alongside academic abilities. At Hillsboro-Deering High School, the faculty believes all students must understand how to act on behalf of their peers while accomplishing superordinate objectives. And the school’s student-leadership strategies can already claim significant progress and successes, including the student-led development of school policies, events, and goals. The ongoing goal of the school’s student-leadership program is to promote the acquisition of new liberties for students while continually fostering a positive relationship between outstanding senior and junior administration.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am + 10:45 am
PRESENTERS: Clarice Clark (faculty advisor), Jennifer Crawford (associate principal), Kym Bergstresser (student leader), Tristan Brooks (student leader), Joshua Gould (student leader), Jim O’Rourke (principal), Katie Ort (student leader), Shannon Thomas (student leader), Jeramy Thompson (faculty advisor), Brianna Welch (student leader)
CONTACT: Jim O’Rourke | jorourke@hdsd.k12.nh.us
hdhs.hdsd.org/pages/Hillsboro-Deering_High_School

4 5 Uncovering, Discovering, and Recovering the Gifts and Talents of Every Learner
Making Community Connections Charter School (MC2), Manchester, NH

Effective student-centered learning taps into students’ strengths, challenges, interests, and abilities as a way to engage their intellectual curiosity and promote greater ownership over the learning process. The Making Community Connections (MC2) Charter School uses learning profiles to uncover, discover, and recover all the gifts and talents each learner possesses. MC2 is a middle/high school with a unique competency-based instructional model that integrates cognitive science and educational research, while also giving learners multiple, self-paced pathways to mastery. Join MC2 staff and students for an interactive exploration of the school’s structures, tools, and stories.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 10:45 am + 1:15 pm
PRESENTERS: Rowan Brantley (student), Elizabeth Cardine (school coach), Kim Carter (executive director), Shaun Davis (student), Angela Hinkle (teacher), Brendan Hinkle (student), Indira Palmer (student)
CONTACT: Kim Carter | kim.carter@mc2school.org
www.mc2school.org

1 3 Supporting a School-Wide Competency-Based Grading and Reporting System
Sanborn Regional High School, Kingston, NH

Over the past three years, Sanborn Regional High School has developed a school-wide competency-based grading and reporting model that has received local, state, and national attention. Based on some of the latest assessment research by Ken O’Connor, Rick Wormeli, Robert Marzano, Rick Stiggins, and Rose Colby, the model is aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the competency-based model promoted by the New England Secondary School Consortium. Participants in this multimedia session will learn about how we structured our system, how we implemented it in a school of 750 students, and how it reinforces our school’s vision of learning for all. Participants will also have an opportunity to
Introducing Aspire: Competency-Based Learning Unbound
Virtual Learning Academy Charter School, Exeter, NH

In July, the Virtual Learning Academy Charter School was awarded a Next Generation Learning Challenge grant to implement a breakthrough college-readiness model. Called VLACS Aspire, the model provides students and families with the opportunity to radically personalize learning by creating individualized “learning playlists” that reflect their particular interests and goals. Students earn competencies through a variety of learning pathways, including independent studies, projects, internships, work experiences, online courses, face-to-face courses, hobbies, service learning, or a combination of activities. Students who participate in a VLACS Aspire learning experience will find that there is no prescribed way or timeline for earning a competency; there is just the way that works best for the student. Participants in this session will leave with a better understanding of competency-based education and the VLACS Aspire program.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 2:15 pm + 3:45 pm
PRESENTERS: Anthony Baldasaro (chief human resource officer), Steve Kossakoski (chief executive officer), Gary Tirone (special projects coordinator)
CONTACT: Steve Kossakoski | skossakoski@vlacs.org
vlacs.org

Turning a School Around: Lessons Learned in a Large Urban School
Central Falls High School, Central Falls, RI

In 2010, Central Falls High School experienced a very challenging year. After being deemed “persistently low achieving” and in need of intervention by the Rhode Island Department of Education, the school created a bold plan to improve graduation rates, the school culture, and student math proficiency. While the past three years have not always been easy, the entire school community—teachers, students, parents, and community partners—have come together to make the school a truly great place to learn. And progress is happening: the four-year graduation rate improved from 48% in 2009 to 70% in 2012, while student proficiency in mathematics has nearly doubled. In addition, community members all report an improved school culture and learning environment. In this session, the presenters will tell the Central Falls story from multiple perspectives, giving participants an insider’s view of the struggles and successes of large urban school in the process of improving. In addition, the presenters will share findings from The Central Falls High School Third Year Transformation Report, an independent study conducted by the Education Alliance and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 2:15 pm + Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am
PRESENTERS: Evelyn Cante (student), Victor Capellan (deputy superintendent for transformation), Kim Cataldo (teacher), Joshua Laplante (principal), Therese McMaugh (parent), Susan Volluci (teacher)
CONTACT: Victor F. Capellan | capellanv@cfschools.net
www.cfschools.net
Teacher Leading Professional Development
Coventry High School and Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School, Coventry, RI

Over the past two years, Coventry High School and Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School have been working together to increase professional-development opportunities for all faculty members. By utilizing “resident experts” to deliver professional development in technology, the Common Core State Standards, formative assessment, and questioning skills, teachers have increased their professional knowledge and skills in these critical instructional areas. Participants will leave the session with a clear framework for building capacity in their schools through teacher-led professional development.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 3:45 pm + Friday, March 21 | 1:15 pm
PRESENTERS: Maria Boulmetis (teacher, Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School), Lynne Burke (assistant principal, Coventry High School), Jennifer Graham (teacher, Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School), Michael Hobi (principal, Coventry High School), Arthur Lisi (principal, Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School), Vincent Maccarone (teacher, Coventry High School), Michael Rockwell (teacher, Coventry High School), Joyce Windrow (teacher, Coventry High School)

CONTACT: Michael Hobin | hobinmichael@coventryschools.net, Arthur Lisi | LisiArthur@coventryschools.net

www.coventryschools.net

The Power of Collective Practice
Cumberland High School, Cumberland, RI

When teachers collaborate and learn from one another, both classroom practice and student performance improves. A highly qualified but professionally isolated teacher is no longer enough—to overcome today’s educational challenges, teachers need to work together. While new evaluation systems may help to improve teaching, they still do not harness the power of collective practice. Cumberland High School’s emerging plan focuses on the school as an instructional organization, while using collective practice to enhance instructional quality and effectiveness. In this session, participants will learn how to use technology, social media, professional learning groups, micro-teaching, “Smarter Cookie,” an “open door” initiative, new leadership approaches, and RTI data systems to increase the professional capacity of their school.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 3:45 pm + Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am
PRESENTERS: Jessie Butash (assistant principal), Adolfo Costa (assistant principal), Malinda DeWaele (STEM Interdisciplinary Coordinator), Amanda Letoile (humanities interdisciplinary coordinator), Alan Tenreiro (principal)

CONTACT: Alan Tenreiro | alan.tenreiro@cumberlandschools.org

www.cumberlandschools.org/content/cumberland-high-school

Making the Shift from Student to Learner and Teacher to Educator
Westerly High School, Westerly, RI

How can we turn our students into learners and our teachers into educators? Westerly High School—a suburban, comprehensive school of just under a thousand students in southern Rhode Island—is on a mission to answer this fundamental question. In this interactive session, presenters will highlight four school-wide strategies that are advancing the shift: project-based learning (the presenters will showcase the design of a new graduation pathway solely dedicated to project-based learning in an off-campus setting); a school-wide writing initiative (our writing lab bolsters interdisciplinary writing and encourages collaboration with colleagues and students to instill writing confidence and competence); an innovative approach to professional development (the presenters will share their “un-conferencing” strategy that is both meaningful and relevant to the educators and student needs), and a new reporting system (our work reconciles traditional and proficiency-based grading and reporting, which has resulted in higher-quality feedback to students and greater consistency in reporting progress and achievement). Participants will rotate through four sessions and return to a topic of choice to deepen their understanding.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 10:45 am + 1:15 pm
PRESENTERS: Anne Barnhart (NBCT English teacher), Lorri Dean (coordinator of PBL academy), Tony Lementowicz (instructional coordinator), Steven Ruscito (principal), Carmela Sammataro (former English department chair), May Toscano (assistant principal)

CONTACT: Steven Ruscito | sruscito@westerly.k12.ri.us

www.westerly.k12.ri.us
Can You Show What You Know?
One School’s Approach to Proficiency-Based Learning

Big Picture South Burlington High School, South Burlington, VT

Many schools are replacing the Carnegie unit and high-stakes assessments with proficiency-based approaches that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in more authentic and personally meaningful ways. Yet proficiency-based learning brings its own set of challenges for schools. In this workshop, participants will learn how proficiency-based learning is practiced in a personalized, experiential-learning school-within-a-school. Presenters will share their process for transitioning to proficiency-based learning and show how they document and communicate student achievement on reports and transcripts. Students will share their experiences, including examples of projects they have undertaken to meet expected proficiencies. Participants will also leave with concrete action steps they can take to explore or implement proficiency-based learning in their own schools.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 3:45 pm + Friday, March 21 | 1:15 pm
PRESENTERS: Ella Downey (student), Anna Finklestein (advisor), Amelia Payne (student), Shelby Resposa (student), Jim Shields (advisor)
CONTACT: Jim Shields | jshields@bigpicturesb.net

A Magical Mystery Tour: Arts-Infused, Project-Based Learning

Cabot School, Cabot, VT

Cabot School’s high-school band has transformed into a professional soul-funk-rock band. Calling themselves The Limes, the group cut an album at a well-known recording studio and will be going on an East Coast tour later this spring. From management and booking to songwriting and technology, The Limes have taken on all of the responsibilities necessary to independently manage their band and enter the professional music world. This workshop will feature performances by the band and student presentations on how Cabot’s project-based-learning environment helped them learn how to problem solve, promote themselves, and navigate the music business. Music teacher Brian Boyes will also share two related projects in which band students produced music-documentary programs for a local radio station that highlighted the social and cultural aspects of their repertoire. Participants will get a glimpse into the school’s curriculum-mapping process and tips on how to meaningfully infuse the arts into a project-based teaching and learning environment.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am + 10:45 am
PRESENTERS: Brian Boyes (teacher, project-based learning coach), Heidi Cookson (student), Kassandra Morse (student), Timothy Mueller-Harder (student), Dave Schilling (teacher), Gage Sironi (student)
CONTACT: Brian Boyes | bboyes@cabotschool.org
www.cabotschool.org

Seamless Coexistence: Integrating Coursework and Personalized Learning

Mount Abraham Union Middle/High School, Bristol, VT

Mount Abraham has spent the last five years developing a personalized-pathways program that is based on the Big Picture model—but with one significant difference: the great majority of the students who take part in the pathways program also take other courses at the school. While our hybrid model has allowed many more students to take advantage of personalized learning at Mount Abraham, it also created a variety of dilemmas that school leaders have had to address. In this workshop, the presenters will describe the continuum of personalized-learning opportunities offered by the school, and engage participants in a frank and honest discussion of the school’s struggles with a blended model of student learning. Participants will have a chance to hear from and ask questions to staff and students, and they will leave the workshop with a stronger understanding of personalized learning, as well as the challenges and conflicts that may arise.
From Hypothesis to Practice: The Messiness of School-Wide Transformation
Vergennes Union High School, Vergennes, VT

As the classes of 2016 and 2017 begin their high school careers at Vergennes Union, the school’s transition to personalized, performance-based learning continues. Balancing the hopes and dreams of students and staff, the school has embraced rigor, relevance, and relationships, while also offering students voice and choice as they work to acquire vital 21st-century skills. In this presentation, students and teachers will share their recent adventures on their journey toward Performance-Based Graduation Requirements (PBGRs), including, from both the students’ and the teachers’ points of view, topics such as e-portfolio-based evaluation, yearlong projects, and integrated systems of support. In addition to hearing from all learners involved (teachers and students), participants can come away with tools and templates for enhancing the three “Rs” in their school.

Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified: Transcripts and Reporting
Shifting to a proficiency-based graduation system has implications for the design and content of transcripts. The New England Secondary School Consortium is working to develop exemplar transcripts and school profiles. Constructed in collaboration with college-admissions officers, the model transcript and profile provide thoughtful guidance and modeling for school districts to consider. This session will provide participants with a set of general principles they can use to design their system for reporting the summative academic record of an individual student heading to college or the workforce. Participants will receive helpful samples they can bring back to their faculties.

Rethinking Educator Evaluation: A System that Works
When teachers are asked about evaluation, they typically report that they are rarely observed and almost never receive detailed or useful feedback. When principals are asked about evaluation, they often describe the burdens of paperwork and time, and how difficult it is to observe teachers consistently and effectively. Teachers and administrators agree: a new approach is needed.
In this presentation, participants will examine key strategies they can use to meet teacher needs for feedback in a system that isn’t overbuilt for administrators. An evaluation system that focuses on frequent feedback and includes evidence of student learning and student voice can help to improve teaching and learning in our schools. Join us to learn some of the core principles of effective teacher evaluation and to share your experiences with others.
Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified: Formative and Summative Assessment

Assessments are a crucial part of the teaching-and-learning cycle. In a proficiency-based system, teachers assess for learning, using ongoing formative assessments to inform instructional adjustments for students. Incorporating an analysis of the formative-assessment practices used by leading educational experts, participants in this session will learn how to provide clear expectations for students, develop ongoing progress checks, and create a system in which students become agents of their own learning. The presenters will share examples of how teachers develop checks for understanding and discuss a variety of student-centered formative-assessment strategies such as peer assessment. This session will help participants understand the difference between formative and summative assessment; how to develop a manageable formative-assessment system in their classroom that supports student learning; and how to help their students reflect upon and evaluate their own learning progress.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 3:45 pm + Friday, March 21 | 1:15 pm
PRESENTERS: Angela Hardy (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Alex MacPhail (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Angela Hardy | ahardy@greatschoolspartnership.org

Make Sure it Survives: Designing High-Impact, Forward-Thinking Policies for Sustaining Personalized Learning

When policies work, no one notices; but when policies don’t, the results can be disastrous. Forward-thinking policies can sustain successful practices in the event of leadership or staff turnover—a critical consideration for schools that have invested years in the development of new systems of teaching and learning. Using the Consortium’s High Leverage Policy Framework and sample policies supporting proficiency-based learning, this presentation will show participants how to develop effective educational policies and leverage formal systems to create equitable, high-performing, student-centered schools.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 10:45 am
PRESENTERS: Duke Albanese (senior policy advisor, Great Schools Partnership), Jean Haeger (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Duke Albanese | dalbanese@greatschoolspartnership.org

Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified

In this two part workshop, participants will learn about the fundamental components of an effective proficiency-based teaching and learning system, learn about an array of resources that can support their work, and begin to develop a plan that addresses policies, practices, and community-engagement activities that will lead to the successful implementation of proficiency-based learning.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 9:15 am – 12:00 pm (2.5 hour session)
PRESENTERS: Jon Ingram (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Mark Kostin (associate director, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Jon Ingram | jingram@greatschoolspartnership.org

How to Talk About School Improvement: What You Need to Know

In this presentation, participants will learn a variety of effective communication strategies that will work in any school or situation, including the construction of a compelling narrative, the power of specific examples, and the use of language that speaks to the core values of parents and community members. Specific examples and case studies will be used to illustrate the power of effective communications, including one Maine high school's journey from low-performing rural school to a national model of personalized learning. Participants will also receive a brief introduction to the Glossary of Education Reform, a new online resource created by the Great Schools Partnership, and discuss how the glossary can help participants improve understanding of complex school-improvement concepts in their communities.

SESSION: Friday, March 21 | 1:15 pm
PRESENTER: Stephen Abbott (director of communications, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Stephen Abbott | sabbott@greatschoolspartnership.org
www.greatschoolspartnership.org

Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified: Effective Unit Design

So you have defined your standards and performance indicators. But now what? Is designing an instructional unit in a proficiency-based system really any different from the way we’ve been designing units all along?

In this presentation we will outline some of the essential design features of a proficiency-based unit, utilizing the Understanding by Design model developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. We will also share unit examples from a variety of content areas and provide resources to support participants’ ongoing learning and planning.

SESSION: Thursday, March 20 | 2:15 pm
PRESENTERS: Jean Haeger (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Alex MacPhail (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Jean Haeger | jhaeger@greatschoolspartnership.org
www.greatschoolspartnership.org
Regional

**Armando Vilaseca** is the former Secretary of Education for the State of Vermont. Armando has over 29 years of experience in education, having spent his entire professional career in Vermont schools. He began as a classroom teacher at the Georgia Middle School in Georgia, Vermont, and served as a teaching principal at the Reading Elementary School. He then served as the principal for Westford Elementary and Middle School, assistant principal and then principal of Essex High School, a position he held for 10 years, and superintendent of the Colchester School District. Most recently he has served as the superintendent of Franklin West Supervisory Union.

As the Commissioner of Education in VT, Vilaseca was the first chief state school officer from the state to coordinate state participation in the NESSC. During this time, Vilaseca provided guidance and direction not only to VT’s participation, but as a trusted and valued colleague to educators in other states. Simultaneously, he played an active role in the Council for Chief State School Officers, championing the ideas and needs of rural states across the country.

A resident of Westford, Vermont, Vilaseca graduated from the University of Vermont with a bachelor of science degree in education. He received his masters in education with a focus on educational leadership from Lesley College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Vilaseca has served on the NESSC Council from its inception in 2009 until the end of 2013.

Connecticut

**Kathleen C. Greider** has served as the Superintendent of Schools for the Farmington Public Schools since 2009. Superintendent Greider’s collaborative work with the Board of Education, administration, faculty, students, and community initiated innovative improvement efforts aligned to a new core improvement strategy, The Framework for Teaching and Learning (FTL). This Framework is very tightly aligned with the ideas of the NESSC and led the district’s high school to join the League of Innovative Schools in 2012.

Prior to her role in Farmington, Greider served as the Deputy Superintendent of the Greenwich Public Schools, leading all of the district’s Teaching and Learning initiatives. As a tireless advocate for transforming classroom practice, she focused upon advancing data driven decision-making, enhancing observation of classroom instruction, streamlining organizational systems, and providing clear expectations and goal-setting processes to inform school and district improvement. As Lead Principal for the Hartford Public Schools from August 2005 until her appointment in Greenwich in 2007, she initiated an innovative Leadership Development process to promote instructional leadership. Prior to becoming Lead Principal, she was Principal of Dwight Elementary School in Hartford, a high poverty urban school recognized for significantly raising student achievement receiving the NCLB Blue Ribbon Award and the Connecticut Vanguard School Award in 2004-2005. Greider has been a effective advocate for the NESSC in CT.

Maine

**Stephen Bowen** grew up on the coast of Maine and taught social studies in middle and high schools for ten years. After serving two terms in the Maine Legislature, he joined a Maine-based public policy think tank, where he served as an education policy researcher and analyst. Bowen served as the Commissioner of Education for Maine from March 2011 through August 2013. Bowen focused on key policy areas including educator effectiveness, state accountability, digital learning, and student-centered learning. State proficiency-based graduation legislation that passed with Bowen’s guidance and support in 2012 has been noted as a model policy for other states to follow. Bowen currently works at the Council of Chief State School Officers as the Strategic Initiative Director for Innovation overseeing the Council’s Innovation Lab Network. Bowen served on the NESSC Council from 2011 through 2013.

New Hampshire

**Senator Molly Kelly**, a Democrat from Keene originally elected in 2006, is in her fourth term representing District 10 located in the heart of the state’s scenic Monadnock Region. Senator Kelly is currently a member of the Health, Education and Human Services Committee—playing an important role in supporting the revision of the state Minimum Standards—as well as Rules, Enrolled Bills & Internal Affairs. Senator Kelly was the prime sponsor of the school accountability legislation guaranteeing an adequate education for all children in New Hampshire. She also led senate efforts regarding anti-bullying, cyber-bullying legislation and the safe school building initiative.
Senator Nancy Stiles is currently serving her second term in the New Hampshire Senate where she has been a Republican member since 2010. She previously served three terms in New Hampshire's House of Representatives. As chair of the Health, Education and Human Services Committee, Senator Stiles has played a pivotal role in NH education, including supporting the revision of the state’s Minimum Standards. In 2011, Senator Stiles was the driving force behind reforming how New Hampshire funds public education ensuring a predictable funding methodology that provides stability to state and school district budgets.

Prior to entering politics, Sen. Stiles served as the School Nutrition Director for the Hampton School District for 30 years, retiring in 2004. She has a bachelor of science degree from Granite State College and has been credentialed through the National School Nutrition Association. In 2012, the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation cited Stiles for her distinguished public service for working to combat childhood obesity—the first person from New Hampshire to ever receive the honor. And in 2010, she was recognized with a Legislative Award from the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and was named Legislator of the Year in 2008 by the Council on Developmental Disabilities. She is currently a member of the Board of Trustees for Great Bay Community College and St. John’s International University. Senator Stiles has served on the NESSC Council since its inception in 2009.

Rhode Island

Michael Barnes, Ph.D. has served as Superintendent of the Foster-Glocester Regional School District since October 2008 and is the 2014 Rhode Island Superintendent of the Year. Barnes’ experience is deeply rooted in teaching and learning. Barnes has worked collaboratively with educators in his district to foster standards-based education and effective instructional practices and to create Academies with flexible pathways that lead to college credit and/or industry certification, including a 7-12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Academy. He has served as an Assistant Superintendent, a Fellow at the Rhode Island Department of Educational and has provided technical assistance to schools and districts in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and proficiency-based graduation, among others. Under his leadership, the district focused on the development of students’ 21st Century Skills and state assessment scores have notably increased.

A Milken National Educator and Rhode Island Technology Teacher of the Year, Barnes has served on the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Commission for six years and the NEASC 2011 Standards Writing Committee and has been an active member of the NESSC Council since it’s inception in 2009.

Vermont

Alyson Richards currently serves as the Director of Special Projects and Intergovernmental Affairs for Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin. In this capacity, she is the Governor’s liaison to regional and federal agencies and organizations, including the National Governors Association, the Coalition of Northeast Governors, and the White House Task Force on Climate Preparedness. She also manages many of the large projects that come through the Governor’s office, including a study commission on University of Vermont and state relations, and a successful Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge proposal that will bring in $37 million to the state over the next four years to build and enhance Vermont’s early childhood system.

In 2013, Richards brought together a coalition of education, business and legislative stakeholders to pass a series of education initiatives including free lunch for all low-income Vermont students and the Flexible Pathways bill, which creates a statewide program for expanding dual enrollment, early college, apprenticeship and virtual learning opportunities and launches personalized learning plans for all students. For her leadership in her role in the Governor’s Office, Richards was selected as a 2013 Henry Toll Fellow by the Council of State Governments.

Richards grew up in Newbury, VT and as a high school freshman was appointed by Governor Howard Dean as the student representative to the State Board of Education. She is delighted to be back at work on these important issues in her home state. Richards has served on the NESSC Council since 2012.
ABOUT

THE NEW ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL CONSORTIUM is a pioneering partnership committed to fostering forward-thinking innovations in the design and delivery of secondary education across the New England region. The five partner states of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Great Schools Parntership believe that our bold vision, shared goals, and innovative strategies will empower us to close persistent achievement gaps, promote greater educational equity and opportunity for all students, and lead our educators into a new era of secondary schooling.

Our Goals

1. Increasing five-year graduation rates across each of our five states.
2. Decreasing annual dropout rates.
3. Increasing the percentage of students enrolling in two- and four-year college degree programs or pursuing accredited, industry-certified postsecondary certificates.
4. Increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school college-ready.

Our Objectives

Our five states are committed to pursuing three long-term objectives:

1. Diplomas that certify readiness for life: High school graduation decisions that are based on students demonstrating proficiency on learning standards.
2. Student-centered learning opportunities: Personalized and flexible proficiency-based learning pathways for all students.
3. Measuring what matters most: Learner-centered accountability systems that utilize multiple measures of student achievement.

What We Do

The Consortium brings together state leaders and educators together to pursue three overarching strategies:

Policy: Advance a state-led policy agenda focused on three critical, high-leverage areas of schooling in the 21st century: graduation decisions, learning pathways, and accountability systems.

Practice: Connect and support practicing educators across states through networking activities, best-practice exchange, and our League of Innovative Schools.

Public Will: Build public understanding of and support for more innovative approaches to educating today’s students.

Why It Matters

Strong schools are the best job-creation program we have. Imagination, expertise, creativity, entrepreneurialism—these are the assets that drive innovation, create new industries, and produce the most sought-after workers. Preparing every student for success will strengthen our economy and empower our communities.

Strong schools are the foundation of our society. Democracy, opportunity, prosperity, equality—the values that have defined America—depend on an informed, engaged, well-educated citizenry. To prepare the next generation of citizens and leaders, we need great schools for every student.

Strong schools create strong communities. Schools are the cornerstones of our communities. We celebrate our students, cheer on our local teams, and welcome graduates into our workplaces, institutions, and families. To keep our communities vibrant, prosperous, and thriving, we need great schools.

newenglandssc.org