HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN IN ACTION
MARCH 26-27, 2015 | NORWOOD, MA

COMPETENCY 6TH ANNUAL
ALL INNOVATION 21ST CENTURY
STUDENTS SKILL STEACHERS
PERSONALIZATION EQUITY
COLLABORATION PREPARED
PATHWAYS INNOVATION
MASTERY GLOBAL CITIZENS
COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION
HIGHER ASPIRATIONS FOR
PROFICIENCY SUCCESS
Dear Colleagues,

Six percentage points.

According to the Consortium’s Common Data Project 2014 Annual Report, between the graduating class of 2009 and the graduating class of 2013, the combined four-year graduation rate across the five NESSC states—Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont—increased six percentage points from 80% to 86%. Something right is happening here.

In September 2009, approximately 96,000 students in our five states entered secondary school as freshmen. Four years later, due to this increase, 5,760 more of those ninth-grade students left with a high school diploma than had been expected when they entered high school.

Combining multiple graduation years from 2009 through 2013, more than 16,000 students graduated who would not have done so at the 2009 rate. Over 16,000 students have had new opportunities opened for them, and 16,000 more students can investigate college. Better jobs are now available to these students. They are more likely to vote. Their families will be better off financially. And their children are more likely to follow in their footsteps getting a high school diploma and potentially going on to college.

This increase hasn’t been easy. It has required collaborative efforts by teachers who provide quality learning opportunities every day for every student. Administrators have had to create support for teachers and find ways to make scarce resources stretch further. Students have dug in when the challenges have mounted and decided that their futures depend upon better learning. Parents have supported their children and, importantly, families and community members have supported their schools. Legislators and policy makers have established perhaps the most advantageous state policy environment in our five states seen anywhere in the United States. Together, we have improved practice, ensured supporting policy, and generated community support.

New England is at the forefront of rethinking education in our country. Schools and districts, state legislators, state education staff, and the general public have made deep commitments to proficiency-based learning and multiple pathways, embracing the value of having students demonstrate what they know and creating a variety of pathways for students to get there. Ensuring equitable and deep learning for each of our students is not a complex goal, but achieving it will be a challenging endeavor we must all pursue together.

It’s really a great time to be an educator. While the days are long and many end with too little appreciation, the country has come to realize the importance of educating all of our children to high levels. This conference is devoted to better learning, believing that educators sharing ideas with other educators is the best way to move our collective work forward. As you engage with others, think about how the strategies you learn today can be integrated into your own work and daily practice. Take a chance to sit next to someone you don’t know at lunch and dig into his or her work. This is your conference, and we are all here to help you reshape teaching and learning for all of our students.

David J. Ruff
Executive Director, Great Schools Partnership

Once again we are seeking your feedback on the conference.
Please take a moment to complete our evaluation survey:
newenglandssc.org/conference/evaluation
AGENDA

Thursday, March 26

8:00 a.m.  Registration – Foyer
9:00 a.m.  Pre-Conference Sessions (pre-registration required)
11:30 a.m. Lunch On Your Own (or pre-paid boxed lunches)
1:00 p.m.  Plenary Session: Putting the “Public” Back in Public Education Reform – Tiffany Ballroom
2:15 p.m.  Concurrent Sessions – Round 1 (10 sessions)
            1st Floor Meeting Rooms: 101, 102, 103, 104, 105/106
            2nd Floor Meeting Rooms: 201, 202, 203, 204, 205/206
3:30 p.m.  Break – Break Stations (1st + 2nd floors)
3:45 p.m.  Concurrent Sessions – Round 2 (10 sessions)
            1st Floor Meeting Rooms: 101, 102, 103, 104, 105/106
            2nd Floor Meeting Rooms: 201, 202, 203, 204, 205/206
5:00 p.m.  Hors d’Oeuvres and Networking – Foyer
6:30 p.m.  Dinner On Your Own
8:00 p.m.  #NESSC15 / #EdChatME: Twitter Chat – Foyer

Friday, March 27

7:00 a.m.  Continental Breakfast – Ballroom Terrace + Foyer
8:00 a.m.  Plenary Session: What Does “Authentic Student Voice” Really Mean? – Tiffany Ballroom
9:15 a.m.  Concurrent Sessions – Round 3 (10 sessions)
            1st Floor Meeting Rooms: 101, 102, 103, 104, 105/106
            2nd Floor Meeting Rooms: 201, 202, 203, 204, 205/206
10:30 a.m. Break – Break Stations (1st + 2nd floors)
10:45 a.m. Concurrent Sessions – Round 4 (10 sessions)
            1st Floor Meeting Rooms: 101, 102, 103, 104, 105/106
            2nd Floor Meeting Rooms: 201, 202, 203, 204, 205/206
12:00 p.m. Lunch – Tiffany Ballroom + Foyer
1:15 p.m.  Concurrent Sessions – Round 5 (8 sessions)
            1st Floor Meeting Rooms: 101, 102, 103, 104, 105/106
            2nd Floor Meeting Rooms: 201, 202, 203
2:30 p.m.  Adjournment (no closing ceremony)
Pre-Conference Sessions

Response to Instruction and 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 a shared understandings about the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) framework as it applies to high schools. The presenters will explore three tiers of supports and interventions—beginning with the role and tasks of “teacher as first responder”—and 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 (1) assess the current status of their RtII initiatives; (2) 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; (3) think about intervention practices that they want to stop, start, deepen, or change; and (4) discuss “how-to’s” for developing, implementing, and sustaining effective intervention practices.

**PRESENTER:** Carol Miller Lieber (senior consultant, Engaging Schools)

**CONTACT:** Carol Miller Lieber | clieber@engagingschools.org

More than Messaging: How Community Engagement Can Build Ownership and Support for School Innovation

As any experienced educator knows, even the best-laid plans can backfire. When it comes to innovation in our public schools, recent examples—both locally and nationally—demonstrate how fragile the public trust can be when issues directly affect their children. Yet when facing potential public backlash, civic institutions often become insular, adopting a defensive posture rather than reaching out to their communities. Some argue that public messaging should be scrubbed and edited, and then carefully rolled out only when necessary. But when community members don’t trust the process—when they don’t feel heard, understood, or involved—even the best messaging can go unheard or ignored. In a democratic society, the most effective change happens when civic institutions model inclusive practices and provide opportunities for their communities to participate and be heard. This workshop will examine the factors that often contribute to public misunderstanding, confusion, and criticism; the foundational elements of authentic community engagement; and the benefits of doing it right.

Participants will leave the workshop with a set of practical strategies that will help them build relationships of trust in their communities, predict and avoid foreseeable crises, and create meaningful opportunities for deliberative dialogue on the most important issues affecting every educator, student, parent, and citizen in a community.

**PRESENTERS:** Stephen Abbott (director of communications, Great Schools Partnership), Shaun Adamec (director of strategic communications, Nellie Mae Education Foundation)

**CONTACT:** Stephen Abbott | sabbott@greatschoolspartnership.org, Shaun Adamec | sadamec@nmefoundation.org

The Research Supporting Proficiency-Based Learning

Proficiency-based learning may take different forms from school to school—there is no universal model or approach—and educators may use a wide variety of diverse, proficiency-based instructional practices. For this reason, educators are unlikely to find an abundant amount of research on “proficiency-based learning,” per se, because the term represents school models and instructional approaches that share many important commonalities, but that may also vary significantly in design, application, and results (as with any educational approach, some schools and teachers do it more effectively than others). The good news, however, is that there is a huge amount of research on the foundational school structures and instructional techniques that—when systematized in a school—are called proficiency-based learning. In this session, the presenters will provide an overview—followed by small-group activities and conversations—of the strong connection between the research literature on teaching and learning and proficiency-based systems of instruction, assessment, and reporting.

Participants will leave with references to valuable research and sample activities and strategies for engaging colleagues and stakeholders in discussions about this important topic.

**PRESENTERS:** Mark Kostin (associate director, Great Schools Partnership), Kate Gardoqui (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Mark Kostin | mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org
Planning for Proficiency-Based Learning in Your District

In this session, school coaches from the Great Schools Partnership will share a comprehensive approach to developing a multiyear district plan for implementing proficiency-based learning, including a set of resources, such as a district self-assessment and planning tool, that are designed to guide a district leadership team through a thoughtfully staged process that will result in a concrete plan of action, that will also build upon the district’s existing assets in the areas of policy, practice, and community engagement.

Participants will leave with a stronger understanding of the components of district-wide implementation. While the session will help districts that are just beginning their work, the resources and strategies will also be beneficial to districts already transitioning to a proficiency-based system.

**PRESENTERS:** Pam Fisher (senior advisor, Great Schools Partnership), Ken Templeton (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Pam Fisher | pfisher@greatschoolspartnership.org

League of Innovative Schools Networking Meeting

This meeting is for current League members only. In addition to providing participants with an update on regional activities and opportunities, participants will hear about and discuss recent advances about personalized learning taking place around the country and engage in collaborative learning around commonly shared problems of practices.

Plenary Sessions

Putting the “Public” Back in Public Education Reform

As education grabs the national spotlight and more and more people try to take center stage, the core of learning success remains the same—high quality instruction on a daily basis that captures and engages students. This conference is designed to share these ideas educator to educator. The opening session will welcome participants and share annual highlights. Following this, Nicholas Donohue, president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, will be presenting new learning regarding public engagement and understanding. How does the general public hear and understand education that personalizes learning for students, focusing on deep and equitable outcomes? And does the public agree that this is necessary? Mr. Donohue will be sharing some of the latest research conducted and collected by the Foundation.

**SESSION:** Thursday, March 26 | 1:00 p.m.

**PRESENTERS:** Nicholas Donohue (president and CEO, Nellie Mae Education Foundation), David J. Ruff (executive director, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** David Ruff | druff@greatschoolspartnership.org

What Does “Authentic Student Voice” Really Mean?

Educators often talk about “student voice,” but what does the concept really mean to students? And in what ways can educators promote and support genuine opportunities for students to take on leadership roles in their school, advocate for issues that truly matter to them, and have their voices not only be heard but acted upon? This presentation will be kicked off by a documentary-style video on youth voice and leadership produced by students from the Hartford Journalism and Media Academy Magnet School in association with the Connecticut Public Broadcasting Network. Several student-leaders and representatives from the Providence Student Union and Young Voices in Rhode Island will then deliver presentations on student organizing, advocacy, and leadership development. A facilitated panel discussion with the students will follow, and questions will be taken from the audience.

**SESSION:** Friday, March 27 | 8:00 a.m.

**PRESENTERS:** Karen Feldman (executive director, Young Voices), Kendal Hall (student leader, Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex), Marcel Mensah (student leader, Providence Student Union), Zack Mezera (executive director, Providence Student Union), Xilian Sansoucy (student leader, Classical High School), Roselin Trinidad (student leader, Providence Student Union) Moderator: Stephen Abbott (director of communications, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Stephen Abbott | sabbott@greatschoolspartnership.org
101 Forcing the Issue: How a New Grading and Reporting Tool is Transforming Instructional Practice

South Portland High School, South Portland, ME

For ten years, South Portland School District undertook a transition to proficiency-based grading practices, moving from its elementary schools into the middle schools and high school. Teachers and administrators read and discussed the relevant literature, listened to various speakers, and researched transitions in other schools. While the district embraced certain tenets of proficiency-based grading, actual implementation stalled. School and district administrators wanted to focus on changes in instructional practice, but teachers rightly stated that there was no efficient and thoughtful way to track and report data in a proficiency-based environment. But when the district implemented a new tool to do just that—one that supports mastery tracking by standards—the need to shift instructional practice became apparent to all. The conversation evolved, as it should, from theory and logistics to what really matters: instruction.

In this session, participants will learn about the steps our district took to implement a proficiency-based system for teaching and learning, with special focus on the changes to instruction, the importance of formative assessment, the separation of student behavior from academic achievement, and the use of proficiency-focused data.

102 No Citizen Left Behind: How Student Voice Transformed a Civics Course

Harwood Union Middle/High School, Moretown, VT

Who can help America’s youth develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to become active and informed citizens? The answer is clear: our schools! In this session, participants will learn about the transformation of a tenth-grade civics course when the teacher stopped listening to tradition and began listening to students. Participants will learn how a shift toward proficiency-based education ushered in a series of powerful changes that were developed, with the help of students, to improve teaching and learning, including deliberative democratic dialogue that builds collective wisdom; assessment policies that encourage greater risk-taking, effort, and growth; lessons on political and media literacy; experiential learning opportunities and the use of the natural world as a classroom; authentic tasks and real-world projects; and greater parental and community involvement through the use of social media.

Participants will be guided through an interactive dialogue designed to help them rethink their own practice and share their thoughts with the larger group.

103 Baby Steps: Make Proficiency-Based Learning and Assessment Happen in Your Classroom Now

Academy of Information Technology & Engineering, Stamford, CT

To many educators, transitioning to proficiency-based learning and assessment is a natural and inevitable step toward authentic student-centered education. It’s a step that can increase student engagement, simplify differentiation, and—best of all—ensure that students graduate with content mastery and intellectual self-sufficiency. The problem is that school-wide transitioning to a new proficiency-based model presents challenges that can take years to overcome. The good news is that you don’t have to wait. In this presentation, four teachers from the Academy of Information Technology & Engineering, a public magnet high school, will show participants how they can bring the benefits of proficiency-based learning and assessment to their students, in their own classroom, today.

In this session, participants will learn strategies and methods for implementing a proficiency-based model by adapting content sequence, classroom instruction, homework strategies, assessments, and grade books—all the while complying with Connecticut’s new teacher-evaluation system.

104 Student-Directed Senior Projects: Lessons from Year One

North Smithfield High School, North Smithfield, RI

With the support of district leadership, a group of teachers and administrators undertook the design of a senior project to replace an existing portfolio assessment—a two-year process that entailed in-depth conversations with various stakeholders about the project’s purpose and scope. During the design phase, the team did their best to anticipate challenges and issues, and during implementation they tried to continuously reflect on what was successful and unsuccessful. Looking
back on the first year, it’s clear that the senior project successfully delivered a rigorous personalized-learning experience for students that afforded them the opportunity to experience a self-directed, interest-driven project. Based on multiple sources of data collected throughout the year, the team is also convinced that the project will need to be fine-tuned over time.

Participants will leave this presentation with a comprehensive overview of the lessons that one school learned when designing and implementing a senior project.

105/106  Our School-Wide Journey Toward a Growth Mindset
Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School, Coventry, RI

Fostering a growth mindset among all stakeholders is an integral component of our vision at Feinstein Middle School. We are confident, that with the right training and supports, a growth mindset can help students, teachers, and parents cultivate the belief that all students can grow their intelligence, enhance their abilities, and develop an inner resilience and motivation to strive for excellence. In an effort to embrace our vision and encourage students to take on challenges, learn from their mistakes, and view effort as the road to success, we have embarked on a school-wide, growth-mindset journey. Through a faculty book study and parent study group, weekly administrative newsletters, and a renewed advisory focus, the mindset of the school community is starting to shift.

Participants will learn how we began to transform our thinking and leave with strategies for fostering a growth mindset among all stakeholders in their school community.

201  Prove It! Using Student Portfolios as Evidence of Proficiency
Great Bay Charter School, Exeter, NH

This interactive and informal session will help participants understand the power of the student portfolio as a means of demonstrating proficiency. We will explore how to coach students in the accumulation and presentation of evidence; how literacy across the curriculum is a best practice in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in today’s educational environment; and how student self-reflection and self-assessment should become the foundation for improved achievement at all levels. Presenters will also share a variety of requirements and recommendations for a portfolio program. Understanding parental concerns and involving parents in the portfolio process will also be addressed, and time will be provided for those in attendance to share ideas, concerns, and experiences.

Participants will leave with an understanding of how to support students as they become partners in the portfolio process, and tools that will help them use portfolios, incorporate literacy across the curriculum, and expect self-reflections in their schools or classrooms.

202  Getting to 1:1: A Story of Planning and Progress
Winnacunnet High School, Hampton, NH

This session will explore Winnacunnet High School as a case study for the transition to 1:1 Chromebooks for students. The presenters will discuss planning, logistics, budget, professional development, community involvement, library involvement, and assistive technology. The presenters will also examine case studies of other schools undergoing similar transitions, including Windham in New Hampshire, Burlington in Massachusetts, and MSAD 60 in Maine.

Participants will leave the session with a stronger understanding of the key barriers and assets in a successful 1:1 deployment, strategies for professional development in technology, and the merits and drawbacks of specific device deployments.

203  PD of the Teachers, by the Teachers, for the Teachers
Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA

Is student-centered learning only for students? Or do the same principles apply to adult professional development? Students at the Center, a Jobs for the Future initiative, in partnership with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, brought practicing teachers together with a university professor to explore student-centered learning concepts. Teachers then transformed research on motivation, engagement, self-regulation, and student voice into teacher-created, learner-centered professional development modules, resulting in four “off the shelf” professional development modules exploring how practitioners can implement researched-based practices.

In this session, one of the participating educators will discuss the module-development process, as well as model a lesson from the student engagement module. Participants will leave this session with a sample module with links to the full series, along with advice on implementing teacher-created, learner-centered professional development.
Effective partnerships take a surprising amount of time to develop and ongoing practice to maintain. Programs predicated on effective partnerships will result in an explosion of positive, and often unintended, side effects—a primary indicator that the partnerships are authentic. Many good initiatives don’t get off the ground or reach the heights they merit due to cultural disconnects, power dynamics, and a host of other possible factors. Using a multimodal panel format, a diverse band of underdogs will share how they created a best-practice showcase for a whole state that is now influencing much larger institutions, and how this showcase resulted in wins for all players—especially the students.

In this session, participants will learn about recipes and techno pop, rivers and crash dummies, legislative luck, troublesome teens, and the mysterious untapped powers and resources in their own back yard that can create a win-win-win situation for their schools, students, and communities!

Maximizing Professional Learning: Taking PLGs to the Next Level

An extensive and growing body of research has shown that professional learning groups provide highly effective professional development for educators—when they are well designed, well facilitated, and supported by their schools. In this session, presenters and participants will explore the most effective ways to focus PLGs on building capacity in teachers as they implement personalized, proficiency-based teaching and learning in schools and districts.

The session is open to all, though targeted toward schools with PLGs already in place. We will identify some of the ways schools and PLG members can inadvertently erode their PLGs’ efficacy, and then turn our attention to the must-have practices and norms that ensure PLGs’ impacts on teaching and learning.

Thursday, March 26

Data, Information, Action! Using Results to Drive Improvement

In working to implement a collaborative professional learning community model for professional development and school improvement, Foxcroft Academy leverages PowerSchool and PowerTeacher Gradebook to gather data on students, assessments, standards, and courses. Linking outcomes with demographics such as grade level, gender, and free and reduced-price lunch eligibility has provided powerful opportunities to reflect on its programs and personalize learning for students. In this session, the presenters will share classroom-based and school-wide processes for turning data into information and acting upon it to improve outcomes for students.

While the presentation will be grounded in specific software solutions, participants will leave with several processes for using data systems and applications to enhance proficiency-based learning in the classroom and improve patterns of performance throughout the school.

No Citizen Left Behind: How Student Voice Transformed a Civics Course

Who can help America’s youth develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to become active and informed citizens? The answer is clear: our schools! In this session, participants will learn about the transformation of a tenth-grade civics course when the teacher stopped listening to tradition and began listening to students. Participants will learn how a shift toward proficiency-based education ushered in a series of powerful changes that were developed, with the help of students, to improve teaching and learning, including deliberative democratic dialogue that builds collective wisdom; assessment policies that encourage greater risk-taking, effort, and growth; lessons on political and media literacy; experiential learning opportunities and the use of the natural world as a classroom; authentic tasks and real-world projects; and greater parental and community involvement through the use of social media.

Participants will be guided through an interactive dialogue designed to help them rethink their own practice and share their thoughts with the larger group.
103 I Read the News Today, Oh Boy
Regional School Unit 2, Hallowell, ME

Regional School Unit 2 (RSU 2) is a K–12 school system in its fourth year of transitioning to proficiency-based learning. This interactive presentation will focus in on a day in the life of a teacher in a proficiency-based, student-centered public school. The presenters will pose a set of questions to participants in the room, facilitate short discussions at tables, and then show short videos of middle and high school teachers from RSU 2 answering the same questions. We will also have teachers Skyping in to answer questions as they come up. Time will be provided for questions to the whole group at the end of the session.

Participants will leave with links to videos from RSU 2 that they can share with their staff during the exciting—but often stressful—transition to a proficiency-based system.

104 Student-Directed Senior Projects: Lessons from Year One
North Smithfield High School, North Smithfield, RI

With the support of district leadership, a group of teachers and administrators undertook the design of a senior project to replace an existing portfolio assessment—a two-year process that entailed in-depth conversations with various stakeholders about the project’s purpose and scope. During the design phase, the team did their best to anticipate challenges and issues, and during implementation they tried to continuously reflect on what was successful and unsuccessful. Looking back on the first year, it’s clear that the senior project successfully delivered a rigorous personalized-learning experience for students that afforded them the opportunity to experience a self-directed, interest-driven project. Based on multiple sources of data collected throughout the year, the team is also convinced that the project will need to be fine-tuned over time.

Participants will leave this presentation with a comprehensive overview of the lessons that one school learned when designing and implementing a senior project.

105/106 A Collaborative Approach to Dropout Prevention: It’s All About the Kid!
North Country Charter Academy, Littleton, NH

North Country Charter Academy is a mission-driven public charter school collaborating with ten school districts to solve an intractable dropout problem. The school offers a personalized, competency-based curriculum that utilizes a blended, distance-learning model in which students work independently and at their own pace in a brick-and-mortar building with the support of a certified teaching staff. Students are provided multiple pathways and opportunities by which to complete high school, and they earn credit when they demonstrate mastery of subject matter. Over the past ten years, the model has contributed significantly to a 74% reduction in the number of dropouts in Grafton and Coos Counties in Northern New Hampshire and has graduated a total of 362 students—78 of which had been prior high school dropouts.

Participants will leave this session with a clear understanding of how the North Country model operates and how they can adapt this model for use in any type of educational setting.

201 Prove It! Using Student Portfolios as Evidence of Proficiency
Great Bay Charter School, Exeter, NH

This interactive and informal session will help participants understand the power of the student portfolio as a means of demonstrating proficiency. We will explore how to coach students in the accumulation and presentation of evidence; how literacy across the curriculum is a best practice in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in today’s educational environment; and how student self-reflection and self-assessment should become the foundation for improved achievement at all levels. Presenters will also share a variety of requirements and recommendations for a portfolio program. Understanding parental concerns and involving parents in the portfolio process will also be addressed, and time will be provided for those in attendance to share ideas, concerns, and experiences.

Participants will leave with an understanding of how to support students as they become partners in the portfolio process, and tools that will help them use portfolios, incorporate literacy across the curriculum, and expect self-reflections in their schools or classrooms.
202 Scoring Big: Designing and Implementing Successful Standards-Based Assessments  
Naugatuck High School, Naugatuck, CT

You’ve got great teachers, great standards, and a nicely aligned curriculum—but how do you know they’re all working together to provide a rigorous academic program aimed at student success? Assessments, both formative and summative, can validate work and measure student achievement. In this session, a variety of assessment strategies will be shared, and data will be examined and critiqued for its usefulness in not only tracking student learning growth over time, but also in determining whether specific teacher-created assessments are valid and reliable as reporting instruments for student learning growth and achievement. In this session, the presenters will review assessments that encourage inquiry and critical thinking as well as the rubrics developed to capture student progress and achievement. Participants will hear from students and teachers and engage in activities that will help them create better assessment instruments and performance tasks that align with standards and help students build their skills in an environment of continuous improvement and growth.

Participants can expect to learn how to create rigorous assessments with rubrics designed to measure standards and provide reliable data on student learning growth.

203 Making Learning Stick: Leveraging Community Resources to Develop Project-Based, Interdisciplinary Pathways  
Deer Isle-Stonington High School, Deer Isle, ME

After raising its graduation rate from 57% in 2009 to more than 90% each of the past three school years, Deer Isle-Stonington High School found itself confronted with a new challenge. To maintain the rigor and integrity of its diploma and ensure that all graduates were college and career ready, the school decided to confront a perceived lack of student engagement head-on. By using existing community resources and deep collaboration with a wide range of community partners, Deer Isle-Stonington High School is building three project-based, interdisciplinary, thematic pathways in marine studies, the arts, and health care that will engage students in authentic study in the community, while also helping them meet rigorous core content-area requirements. Each pathway combines student interest and resources that already exist in the community to make challenging academic content accessible to all students as they become lifelong learners.

Participants will learn about several strategies they can use to identify and collaborate with community partners in the design and delivery of interdisciplinary, project-based learning experiences.

204 Teacher-Driven, Student-Centered Learning  
Revere High School, Revere, MA

Are you interested in connecting all of the initiatives at your school to create a more student-centered focus? Flipped learning strategies help to build the comprehensive approach to student achievement that all schools aspire to by demanding more student accountability and increasing opportunities for mentor-mentee relationships between students and teachers. In this session, presenters will dive into the theory behind flipped classrooms, explore lesson plans, and provide valuable resources to support this model of teaching school-wide.

Participants will learn how an urban school in Massachusetts used the Common Core, 1:1 iPads, and flipped learning to effectively deliver rigorous and advanced coursework that improves access and opportunities for a diverse population of learners, while simultaneously using professional development to change the school culture.

205/206 Talking About Proficiency: What You Need to Know  
New England Secondary School Consortium

The transition to proficiency-based learning is one of the most important educational strategies being pursued by numerous schools across New England and the country. Yet while nearly everyone agrees that higher academic achievement and stronger student preparation are absolutely essential in today’s world, explaining the rationale behind learning standards and proficiency-based diplomas, or describing new approaches to instruction, assessment, grading, and reporting, can quickly pose a tricky communications dilemma for educators.

In this session, the presenters will discuss a variety of research-based strategies that will help school leaders and educators increase understanding of proficiency-based learning in their communities, including the construction of a compelling narrative, the power of metaphors and specific examples, and the use of language that speaks to the values of parents, families, and community members. Participants will leave with a stronger understanding of how to talk about proficiency-based learning in ways that are comprehensible and compelling to a wide variety of audiences.
101 Tech-Transformed Teaching and Learning: The Lancer One Initiative
Lamoille Union Middle/High School, Hyde Park, VT

In a 2012 survey of students, administrators and technology integrators found that almost 50% of Lamoille Union Middle and High School students did not have access to a digital device outside of school. And in school teachers were waiting weeks to use technology in classes and opportunities for personalization and differentiation were limited. Visitors walking through the halls today, however, will see students and teachers accessing and using technology to communicate, create, and engage in 21st century learning. The Lancer One project provided an iPad to each student in grades 7–12 and helped transform the school by focusing on four specific goals: universal access, spontaneous learning, equity, and personalized learning.

Participants will leave with a model of technology-based transformation, including examples of what this change looks like and how it was implemented.

102 Forcing the Issue: How a New Grading and Reporting Tool is Transforming Instructional Practice
South Portland High School, South Portland, ME

For ten years, South Portland School District undertook a transition to proficiency-based grading practices, moving from its elementary schools into the middle schools and high school. Teachers and administrators read and discussed the relevant literature, listened to various speakers, and researched transitions in other schools. While the district embraced certain tenets of proficiency-based grading, actual implementation stalled. School and district administrators wanted to focus on changes in instructional practice, but teachers rightly stated that there was no efficient and thoughtful way to track and report data in a proficiency-based environment. But when the district implemented a new tool to do just that—one that supports mastery tracking by standards—the need to shift instructional practice became apparent to all. The conversation evolved, as it should, from theory and logistics to what really matters: instruction.

In this session, participants will learn about the steps our district took to implement a proficiency-based system for teaching and learning, with special focus on the changes to instruction, the importance of formative assessment, the separation of student behavior from academic achievement, and the use of proficiency-focused data.

103 I Read the News Today, Oh Boy
Regional School Unit 2, Hallowell, ME

Regional School Unit 2 (RSU 2) is a K–12 school system in its fourth year of transitioning to proficiency-based learning. This interactive presentation will focus in on a day in the life of a teacher in a proficiency-based, student-centered public school. The presenters will pose a set of questions to participants in the room, facilitate short discussions at tables, and then show short videos of middle and high school teachers from RSU 2 answering the same questions. We will also have teachers Skyping in to answer questions as they come up. Time will be provided for questions to the whole group at the end of the session.

Participants will leave with links to videos from RSU 2 that they can share with their staff during the exciting—but often stressful—transition to a proficiency-based system.

104 Walk the Walk: A Blended-Learning Approach to Student-Centered Learning
Highlander Institute, Warren, RI

Flexibility, critical thinking, collaboration: these are the skills most essential for success in today’s—and tomorrow’s—ever-changing world. As educators, it’s our job to ensure that students are ready to shine and have the ability to grow the personal agency they will need to shape their future and the world. Yet many educational systems continue to educate students using the learning tools and concepts of the 19th century. Highlander High School is a recent expansion of the popular student-centered Highlander Charter School. At Highlander High, all students create Graduation Roadmaps that plot a personal learning journey centered on pace, place, and path, and they are required to create, execute, and complete an expanded learning opportunity (ELO) each year. During this workshop, the presenters will explore student-centered learning through the lens of ELOs.

Following a blended-learning model, participants will be situated like students in participatory learning experience. They will leave knowing more about blended learning and ELOs, and—most importantly—what it feels like to be a student in this ever-changing educational space.
105/106  A Collaborative Approach to Dropout Prevention: It’s All About the Kid!
North Country Charter Academy, Littleton, NH

North Country Charter Academy is a mission-driven public charter school collaborating with ten school districts to solve an intractable dropout problem. The school offers a personalized, competency-based curriculum that utilizes a blended, distance-learning model in which students work independently and at their own pace in a brick-and-mortar building with the support of a certified teaching staff. Students are provided multiple pathways and opportunities by which to complete high school, and they earn credit when they demonstrate mastery of subject matter. Over the past ten years, the model has contributed significantly to a 74% reduction in the number of dropouts in Grafton and Coos Counties in Northern New Hampshire and has graduated a total of 362 students—78 of which had been prior high school dropouts.

Participants will leave this session with a clear understanding of how the North Country model operates and how they can adapt this model for use in any type of educational setting.

201  Student Voice, Choice, and Action: Global Studies and STEM
Rutland High School, Rutland, VT

At Rutland High School, students have the option to participate in the Global Studies Concentration, the STEM Concentration, or both. These concentrations allow students to pursue their passion for the world and the challenges we face today. In this session, the presenters will discuss how the concentrations were developed, the various options for choice and voice that are offered to students, and how the concentrations impact student learning—both in and out of the classroom. The presenters will also discuss how students are encouraged to take meaningful action on global issues that affect us all. The school’s Global Issues Network Conference, which attracts more than 1,000 students, will also be highlighted as an example of student leadership and civic action.

Participants will leave with a clear understanding of how these programs promote student voice and choice in the school, and how they encourage students to take action on the pressing issues that affect their community and the world.

202  Scoring Big: Designing and Implementing Successful Standards-Based Assessments
Naugatuck High School, Naugatuck, CT

You’ve got great teachers, great standards, and a nicely aligned curriculum—but how do you know they’re all working together to provide a rigorous academic program aimed at student success? Assessments, both formative and summative, can validate work and measure student achievement. In this session, a variety of assessment strategies will be shared, and data will be examined and critiqued for its usefulness in not only tracking student learning growth over time, but also in determining whether specific teacher-created assessments are valid and reliable as reporting instruments for student learning growth and achievement. In this session, the presenters will review assessments that encourage inquiry and critical thinking as well as the rubrics developed to capture student progress and achievement. Participants will hear from students and teachers and engage in activities that will help them create better assessment instruments and performance tasks that align with standards and help students build their skills in an environment of continuous improvement and growth.

Participants can expect to learn how to create rigorous assessments with rubrics designed to measure standards and provide reliable data on student learning growth.

203  Standards-Based Grading: Separating Academic Achievement and Habits of Work
New England Secondary Schools Consortium

Over the past decade, the foremost researchers and experts on grading—including Ken O’Connor, Thomas Guskey, Robert Marzano, Douglas Reeves, Rick Stiggins, Rick Wormeli, and others—have come to agreement on one of the most important practices for improving instructional effectiveness and student learning: monitoring and reporting academic achievement separately from work habits, character traits, and behaviors such as attendance, class participation, and turning work in on time.

In this session, participants will learn about habits-of-work reporting and how the practice can help teachers more accurately diagnose learning needs and improve academic interventions and support. Participants will also learn how to communicate the rationale for separating work habits from content knowledge and skills in grading, and how to engage students, faculty, families, and community members in the process.
204 Teacher-Driven, Student-Centered Learning

Revere High School, Revere, MA

Are you interested in connecting all of the initiatives at your school to create a more student-centered focus? Flipped learning strategies help to build the comprehensive approach to student achievement that all schools aspire to by demanding more student accountability and increasing opportunities for mentor-mentee relationships between students and teachers. In this session, presenters will dive into the theory behind flipped classrooms, explore lesson plans, and provide valuable resources to support this model of teaching school-wide.

Participants will learn how an urban school in Massachusetts used the Common Core, 1:1 iPads, and flipped learning to effectively deliver rigorous and advanced coursework that improves access and opportunities for a diverse population of learners, while simultaneously using professional development to change the school culture.

205/206 Engaging and Motivating High School Students through Student-Centered Learning

Meriden Public Schools, Meriden, CT

In this session, Meriden Public Schools will showcase the implementation of student-centered approaches at Maloney and Platt high schools that have been supported by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation through a New Approaches in Urban Districts grant. Presenters will highlight the schools’ blended-learning environments as well as student-created, personalized-learning experiences that allow students to develop skills that promote college and career readiness. Administrators, principals, teachers, and students will share their first-hand experiences learning and working in this innovative environment, and participants will hear directly from students who have advocated for and embraced these changes.

Participants will learn how teaching and learning have changed the classroom, how it is being extended outside the classroom walls and into the homes and greater community, and how this shift led to an improved school climate and culture in which student voice and community participation are encouraged. By putting students in the center, all districts can engage, motivate, and inspire lifelong learners.

Friday, March 27 10:45–12:00 p.m.

101 Tech-Transformed Teaching and Learning: The Lancer One Initiative

Lamoille Union Middle/High School, Hyde Park, VT

In a 2012 survey of students, administrators and technology integrators found that almost 50% of Lamoille Union Middle and High School students did not have access to a digital device outside of school. And in school teachers were waiting weeks to use technology in classes and opportunities for personalization and differentiation were limited. Visitors walking through the halls today, however, will see students and teachers accessing and using technology to communicate, create, and engage in 21st century learning. The Lancer One project provided an iPad to each student in grades 7–12 and helped transform the school by focusing on four specific goals: universal access, spontaneous learning, equity, and personalized learning.

Participants will leave with a model of technology-based transformation, including examples of what this change looks like and how it was implemented.

102 It’s Not Enough to Give Them What They Need: Self-Advocacy and Student Ownership in Learning

Parker Charter Essential School, Devens, MA

Teaching in a multi-age, heterogeneously grouped, and integrated math and science classroom requires teachers to address the needs of a wide range of learners. It serves as a good model for educators who are being presented with an ever-increasing population of diverse learners and being asked to meet individual needs. Attempting to assess, address, and meet the needs of each learner is just not enough—schools must also teach students the skills of self-advocacy, reflective learning, and self-assessment so that they can take ownership of their learning. As good as it sounds, this is challenging work. In this session, the presenters will share their process for developing a new model for learning—one created through a prepared learning environment where students use supports and intentional tools that personalize learning and assessments, meet diverse learner needs, and promote growth in habits of learning.

Participants will have an opportunity to identify and discuss the factors that are stopping their students from taking greater responsibility for their learning, and the group will brainstorm tools that can be immediately implemented in the classroom.
The Stages of Student Empowerment: Building Voices of Authenticity and Integrity

Making Community Connections Charter School, Manchester, NH

Developing a school culture that values the student perspective—and embraces it as a critical component of effective learning—takes skill, patience, and commitment. Moving beyond student voice to embrace students as partners in co-creating a community of learning calls for knowledge of the developmental stages of empowerment and the leadership skills for nurturing youth and adults through those stages. Staff and students from Making Community Connections Charter School (MC2) will share the successes and challenges they experienced on their journey to student empowerment.

Participants will learn about the structures and processes that MC2 used to engage community members in shaping the decisions that impact their lives.

Walk the Walk: A Blended-Learning Approach to Student-Centered Learning

Highlander Institute, Warren, RI

Flexibility, critical thinking, collaboration: these are the skills most essential for success in today’s—and tomorrow’s—ever-changing world. As educators, it’s our job to ensure that students are ready to shine and have the ability to grow the personal agency they will need to shape their future and the world. Yet many educational systems continue to educate students using the learning tools and concepts of the 19th century. Highlander High School is a recent expansion of the popular student-centered Highlander Charter School. At Highlander High, all students create Graduation Roadmaps that plot a personal learning journey centered on pace, place, and path, and they are required to create, execute, and complete an expanded learning opportunity (ELO) each year. During this workshop, the presenters will explore student-centered learning through the lens of ELOs.

Following a blended-learning model, participants will be situated like students in participatory learning experience. They will leave knowing more about blended learning and ELOs, and—most importantly—what it feels like to be a student in this ever-changing educational space.

A Sample System for Proficiency-Based Learning in the Classroom

Burlington High School, Burlington, VT

This session will introduce participants to the key elements of proficiency-based learning through an in-depth investigation of the instructional process in a high school chemistry course. The presenters will describe a flexible instructional cycle that includes frequent formative assessment and a balance of whole-class instruction and personalized time for practice, re-teaching, tutoring, and extension work. They will also share systems and strategies that teachers can use to manage highly differentiated classrooms, empower students to monitor their own learning, and create a growth-mindset culture. Additional examples from the humanities, mathematics, world languages, ELL classes, and other scientific disciplines will also be discussed to illustrate how Burlington High School teachers are applying proficiency-based structures across the curriculum.

Participants will leave with concrete strategies and an array of materials they can adapt in their own classrooms, and ample time will be provided for participants to ask questions and participate in discussion.

What it Really Takes: Creating Authentic School-Community Partnerships that Empower Students

Woonsocket High School, Woonsocket, RI

Effective partnerships take a surprising amount of time to develop and ongoing practice to maintain. Programs predicated on effective partnerships will result in an explosion of positive, and often unintended, side effects—a primary indicator that the partnerships are authentic. Many good initiatives don’t get off the ground or reach the heights they merit due to cultural disconnects, power dynamics, and a host of other possible factors. Using a multimodal panel format, a diverse band of underdogs will share how they created a best-practice showcase for a whole state that is now influencing much larger institutions, and how this showcase resulted in wins for all players—especially the students.

In this session, participants will learn about recipes and techno pop, rivers and crash dummies, legislative luck, troublesome teens, and the mysterious untapped powers and resources in their own back yard that can create a win-win-win situation for their schools, students, and communities!
New Fairfield Middle School implemented a 1:1 technology initiative three years ago that has allowed for a transformation to 24/7 learning and increased student voice and choice. In this session, the presenters will discuss how personalized instruction has been embedded in the core subjects, and in music, art, and language courses, using the blended-learning model, learning menus, genius hour, and other strategies. A panel of teachers will also discuss how these strategies have transformed their classes into personalized-learning environments within a structured day as they share stories of successes and failures. Student-work examples will be discussed and classroom videos will be shared so participants can observe the student learning experience from their perspective.

Participants will leave this session with strategies that can be implemented the next day in their own classrooms. These strategies will prepare teachers for classroom transformation and allow for students to have voice and choice in every class, every day.

After raising its graduation rate from 57% in 2009 to more than 90% each of the past three school years, Deer Isle-Stonington High School found itself confronted with a new challenge. To maintain the rigor and integrity of its diploma and ensure that all graduates were college and career ready, the school decided to confront a perceived lack of student engagement head-on. By using existing community resources and deep collaboration with a wide range of community partners, Deer Isle-Stonington High School is building three project-based, interdisciplinary, thematic pathways in marine studies, the arts, and health care that will engage students in authentic study in the community, while also helping them meet rigorous core content-area requirements. Each pathway combines student interest and resources that already exist in the community to make challenging academic content accessible to all students as they become lifelong learners.

Participants will learn about several strategies they can use to identify and collaborate with community partners in the design and delivery of interdisciplinary, project-based learning experiences.

So your school has a set of common learning standards for students: Now what’s next? While standards are the foundation of high-quality instruction in a proficiency-based system, teachers also need a common definition of “proficiency” that can be consistently applied from assessment to assessment, lesson to lesson, and course to course. The process of developing scoring criteria can also help educators build a shared understanding of effective formative and summative assessment, and a stronger understanding of what quality student work looks like.

In this session, participants will engage in a series of activities that will help them learn about the role of scoring criteria in a personalized, proficiency-based learning system. Participants will also leave with a set of tools and guidelines for developing scoring criteria in their school.

In this session, Meriden Public Schools will showcase the implementation of student-centered approaches at Maloney and Platt high schools that have been supported by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation through a New Approaches in Urban Districts grant. Presenters will highlight the schools’ blended-learning environments as well as student-created, personalized-learning experiences that allow students to develop skills that promote college and career readiness. Administrators, principals, teachers, and students will share their first-hand experiences learning and working in this innovative environment, and participants will hear directly from students who have advocated for and embraced these changes.

Participants will learn how teaching and learning have changed the classroom, how it is being extended outside the classroom walls and into the homes and greater community, and how this shift led to an improved school climate and culture in which student voice and community participation are encouraged. By putting students in the center, all districts can engage, motivate, and inspire lifelong learners.
101 Formative Assessment and Teacher Feedback: What You Need to Know

New England Secondary School Consortium

In *Visible Learning for Teachers*—which is based on a study of more than 900 meta-analyses representing well over 50,000 research articles and 240 million students—John Hattie describes what students want more than anything else in feedback they receive from teachers: *they want to know how to improve their work so they can do better next time.* Although many teachers incorporate formative assessment into their practice, these assessments don’t always give students the detailed feedback they want and need, and teachers don’t always use formative information to modify instruction. In this session, participants will explore the three elements that can increase the effectiveness of formative assessments: (1) using learning targets well, (2) giving valuable feedback, and (3) creating opportunities for re-teaching, interventions, and support in both classroom and school-wide practice.

In this session, participants will learn about a variety of structures and practices they can use to help students improve their work, strengthen their skills, and accelerate their learning.

102 It’s Not Enough to Give Them What They Need: Self-Advocacy and Student Ownership in Learning

Parker Charter Essential School, Devens, MA

Teaching in a multi-age, heterogeneously grouped, and integrated math and science classroom requires teachers to address the needs of a wide range of learners. It serves as a good model for educators who are being presented with an ever-increasing population of diverse learners and being asked to meet individual needs. Attempting to assess, address, and meet the needs of each learner is just not enough—schools must also teach students the skills of self-advocacy, reflective learning, and self-assessment so that they can take ownership of their learning. As good as it sounds, this is challenging work. In this session, the presenters will share their process for developing a new model for learning—one created through a prepared learning environment where students use supports and intentional tools that personalize learning and assessments, meet diverse learner needs, and promote growth in habits of learning.

Participants will have an opportunity to identify and discuss the factors that are stopping their students from taking greater responsibility for their learning, and the group will brainstorm tools that can be immediately implemented in the classroom.

103 The Stages of Student Empowerment: Building Voices of Authenticity and Integrity

Making Community Connections Charter School, Manchester, NH

Developing a school culture that values the student perspective—and embraces it as a critical component of effective learning—takes skill, patience, and commitment. Moving beyond student voice to embrace students as partners in co-creating a community of learning calls for knowledge of the developmental stages of empowerment and the leadership skills for nurturing youth and adults through those stages. Staff and students from Making Community Connections Charter School will share the successes and challenges they experienced on their journey to student empowerment.

Participants will learn about the structures and processes that MC2 used to engage community members in shaping the decisions that impact their lives.

104 Data, Information, Action! Using Results to Drive Improvement

Foxcroft Academy, Dover Foxcroft, ME

In working to implement a collaborative professional learning community model for professional development and school improvement, Foxcroft Academy leverages PowerSchool and PowerTeacher Gradebook to gather data on students, assessments, standards, and courses. Linking outcomes with demographics such as grade level, gender, and free and reduced-price lunch eligibility has provided powerful opportunities to reflect on its programs and personalize learning for students. In this session, the presenters will share classroom-based and school-wide processes for turning data into information and acting upon it to improve outcomes for students.

While the presentation will be grounded in specific software solutions, participants will leave with several processes for using data systems and applications to enhance proficiency-based learning in the classroom and improve patterns of performance throughout the school.
105/106 A Sample System for Proficiency-Based Learning in the Classroom

Burlington High School, Burlington, VT

This session will introduce participants to the key elements of proficiency-based learning through an in-depth investigation of the instructional process in a high school chemistry course. The presenters will describe a flexible instructional cycle that includes frequent formative assessment and a balance of whole-class instruction and personalized time for practice, re-teaching, tutoring, and extension work. They will also share systems and strategies that teachers can use to manage highly differentiated classrooms, empower students to monitor their own learning, and create a growth-mindset culture. Additional examples from the humanities, mathematics, world languages, ELL classes, and other scientific disciplines will also be discussed to illustrate how Burlington High School teachers are applying proficiency-based structures across the curriculum.

Participants will leave with concrete strategies and an array of materials they can adapt in their own classrooms, and ample time will be provided for participants to ask questions and participate in discussion.

201 Our School-Wide Journey Toward a Growth Mindset

Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School, Coventry, RI

Fostering a growth mindset among all stakeholders is an integral component of our vision at Feinstein Middle School. We are confident, that with the right training and supports, a growth mindset can help students, teachers, and parents cultivate the belief that all students can grow their intelligence, enhance their abilities, and develop an inner resilience and motivation to strive for excellence. In an effort to embrace our vision and encourage students to take on challenges, learn from their mistakes, and view effort as the road to success, we have embarked on a school-wide, growth-mindset journey. Through a faculty book study and parent study group, weekly administrative newsletters, and a renewed advisory focus, the mindset of the school community is starting to shift.

Participants will learn how we began to transform our thinking and leave with strategies for fostering a growth mindset among all stakeholders in their school community.

202 Transforming a Structured Classroom to a Personalized Learning Environment

New Fairfield Middle School, New Fairfield, CT

New Fairfield Middle School implemented a 1:1 technology initiative three years ago that has allowed for a transformation to 24/7 learning and increased student voice and choice. In this session, the presenters will discuss how personalized instruction has been embedded in the core subjects, and in music, art, and language courses, using the blended-learning model, learning menus, genius hour, and other strategies. A panel of teachers will also discuss how these strategies have transformed their classes into personalized-learning environments within a structured day as they share stories of successes and failures. Student-work examples will be discussed and classroom videos will be shared so participants can observe the student learning experience from their perspective.

Participants will leave this session with strategies that can be implemented the next day in their own classrooms. These strategies will prepare teachers for classroom transformation and allow for students to have voice and choice in every class, every day.

203 PD of the Teachers, by the Teachers, for the Teachers

Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA

Is student-centered learning only for students? Or do the same principles apply to adult professional development? Students at the Center, a Jobs for the Future initiative, in partnership with the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, brought practicing teachers together with a university professor to explore student-centered learning concepts. Teachers then transformed research on motivation, engagement, self-regulation, and student voice into teacher-created, learner-centered professional development modules, resulting in four “off the shelf” professional development modules exploring how practitioners can implement researched-based practices.

In this session, one of the participating educators will discuss the module-development process, as well as model a lesson from the student engagement module. Participants will leave this session with a sample module with links to the full series, along with advice on implementing teacher-created, learner-centered professional development.
Presenters

Connecticut

Academy of Information Technology & Engineering, Stamford
www.aiatestamford.org

PRESENTERS: Paul LaQuesse (math teacher), Jeanne Lauer (business and technology teacher), Michelle Pusser (social studies teacher), Vin Urbanowski (math teacher)

CONTACT: Vin Urbanowski | vurbanowski@aiatestamford.org

Meriden Public Schools, Meriden
www.meridenk12.org

PRESENTERS: Robert Angeli (associate superintendent for instruction), Mark Benigni (superintendent of schools), Mark Britton (teacher, Francis T. Maloney High School), Justin Duran (student, Francis T. Maloney High School), James Flynn (teacher, Orville H. Platt High School), Barbara Haeffner (director of curriculum and instructional technology), Jasmine McLeish (student, Orville H. Platt High School), Dante Solano (student, Francis T. Maloney High School), Jennifer Straub (principal, Francis T. Maloney High School), Jacquelyn Townsend (student, Orville H. Platt High School)

CONTACT: Mark Benigni | mark.benigni@meridenk12.org

Naugatuck High School, Naugatuck
www.naugatuckhigh.naugatuck.k12.ct.us

PRESENTERS: Caroline Gordon Messenger (director of curriculum), Emily Leone (world language teacher), Courtney Perrotti (English teacher)

CONTACT: Caroline Messenger | messengc@naugy.net

New Fairfield Middle School, New Fairfield
www.newfairfieldschools.org

PRESENTERS: Christine Baldelli (principal), Mary Fuller (Spanish teacher), Nelson Guizzo (teacher), Kristen Lee (math teacher), Cheryl Milo (assistant principal), Joel Pardalis (English teacher)

CONTACT: Cheryl Milo | milo.cheryl@newfairfieldschools.org

Maine

Deer Isle-Stonington High School, Deer Isle
www.dishs.org

PRESENTERS: Marion Austin (English teacher), Leslie Billings (math and special-education teacher), Liam Griffith (student), Carla Guenther (community partner), Jennifer Larrabee (parent and community partner), Elliott Nevells (student), Todd West (principal)

CONTACT: Todd West | toddwest@dishes.org

Foxcroft Academy, Dover Foxcroft
www.foxcroftacademy.org

PRESENTERS: Jonathan Pratt (assistant head of school for academics), Robert Weber (teacher), Bridget Wright (teacher and leadership team member)

CONTACT: Jonathan Pratt | jon.pratt@staff.foxcroftacademy.org

Regional School Unit 2, Hallowell
www.kidsrsu.org

PRESENTERS: Richard Amero (principal, Monmouth Academy), Steve Lavoie (principal, Richmond High School), Matthew Shea (coordinator of student achievement, RSU 2), Mark Tinkham (principal, Hall-Dale High School)

CONTACT: Matthew Shea | mshea@kidsrsu.org

South Portland High School, South Portland
www.spsd.org

PRESENTERS: Rebecca Brown (director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment), Ryan Caron (principal), Suzanne Godin (superintendent)

CONTACT: Rebecca Brown | brownre@spsd.org

New Hampshire

Great Bay Charter School, Exeter
www.gbecs.org

PRESENTERS: Cheryl York McDonough (executive director), Peter Stackhouse (executive director)

CONTACT: Cheryl McDonough | cmcdonough@gbecs.org
Peter Stackhouse | pstackhouse@gbecs.org
Making Community Connections Charter School, Manchester
www.mc2school.org
PRESENTERS: Angela Hinkle (advisor/teacher), Eddie Marceau (school leader), Nate Townsend (advisor/teacher), MC2 Students
CONTACT: Kim Carter | kim.carter@mc2school.org

North Country Charter Academy, Littleton
www.northcountrycharteracademy.com
PRESENTERS: Patrick Kelly (center manager), Scott Kleinschrodt (center director), Lisa Lavoie (principal)
CONTACT: Lisa Lavoie | llavoie@nccharteracademy.org

Winnacunnet High School, Hampton
www.winnacunnet.org
PRESENTER: David Hobbs, Ed.D. (technology integrator, Winnacunnet High School and lecturer, UNH Department of Education)
CONTACT: David Hobbs | dhobbs@warriors.winnacunnet.org

Rhode Island

Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School, Coventry
www.asfms.net
PRESENTERS: Sandra Clunan (RtI and prof. development coordinator), Lori LeBrun (school counselor), Arthur Lisi (principal), Abby Paon (science teacher)
CONTACT: Arthur Lisi | lisiarthur@coventryschools.net
Abby Paon | paonabb@coventryschools.net

Highlander Institute, Warren
www.highlandercharter.org
PRESENTERS: Dana Borrelli-Murray (executive director, Highlander Institute), Brian Folan (ELO coordinator, Highlander Charter School), Rose Mary Grant (head of school, Highlander Charter School), Simona Simpson (director of multiple pathways, Highlander Charter School)
CONTACT: Dana Borrelli-Murray | dborrelli@highlanderinstitute.org

North Smithfield High School, North Smithfield
www.nshs.northsmithfieldschools.com
PRESENTERS: Kristen Fontaine (student), Rachael Manzi (student), Robert Mezzanotte (principal), Karen Ryan (English teacher/senior project coordinator)
CONTACT: Robert Mezzanotte | rmezzanotte@nsps.us

Woonsocket High School, Woonsocket
www.riverzedgearts.org
www.woonsocketschools.org
PRESENTERS: Karen Barbosa (ELO Woonsocket director, Riverzedge Arts), Bradley Fesmire (artistic director, Riverzedge Arts), Rebekah Greenwald (executive director, Riverzedge Arts)
CONTACT: Karen Barbosa | kbarbosa@woonsocketschools.com

Vermont

Burlington High School, Burlington
http://bhs.bsdvt.org
PRESENTERS: Amy Dickson (teacher learning coordinator), Molly Heath (science teacher)
CONTACT: Amy Dickson | amy@partnershipvt.org

Harwood Union Middle/High School, Moretown
www.harwoodunion.com
PRESENTERS: Omar Batah (student), Haley Hammond (student), Matt Henchen (civics educator), Emma Jean (student), Cole Lavoie (student), Amy Rex (administrator), Mallory Wright (student)
CONTACT: Matt Henchen | mhenchen@wwsu.org

Lamoille Union Middle/High School, Hyde Park
www.luhs18.org
PRESENTERS: Amber Carbine-March (science teacher), Marc Gilbertson (technology integration), Brian Schaffer (principal)
CONTACT: Brian Schaffer | bschaffer@luhs18.org

Rutland High School, Rutland
rhs.rutlandcitypublicschools.org
PRESENTERS: Shannon Adams (student), Matt Burd (student), Marsha Cassel (teacher), Jennifer Kravitz (teacher), Claire Olsen (student), Erica Wallstrom (teacher)
CONTACT: Jennifer Kravitz | jkravitz@rutlandhs.k12.vt.us
Beyond NESSC

Jobs for the Future, Boston, MA
www.jff.org | www.studentsatthecenter.org
PRESENTERS: Tobi Baker-Wright (senior program director, Jobs for the Future), Chris Willems (science teacher, Metropolitan Business Academy)
CONTACT: Sarah Hatton | shatton@jff.org

Parker Charter Essential School, Devens, MA
www.parker.org
PRESENTERS: Julie Carr (special education teacher), Nathan Soule (math science and technology teacher), Tiffany Testa (math science and technology teacher)
CONTACT: Tiffany Testa | ttesta@parker.org

Revere High School, Revere, MA
www.revereps.mec.edu
PRESENTERS: Antonio Cinelli (teacher), Leeanne Collura (teacher), Charles Willis (teacher)
CONTACT: Charles Willis | cwillis@revereps.mec.edu

NESSC

www.greatschoolspartnership.org
www.newenglandssc.org

Maximizing Professional Learning: Taking PLGs to the Next Level
PRESENTERS: Craig Kesselheim (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Becky Wilusz (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Becky Wilusz | bwilusz@greatschoolspartnership.org

Talking About Proficiency: What You Need to Know
PRESENTERS: Stephen Abbott (communications director, Great Schools Partnership), Blythe Armitage (communications associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Blythe Armitage | barmitage@greatschoolspartnership.org

Standards-Based Grading: Separating Academic Achievement and Habits of Work
PRESENTERS: Janet Garagliano (Connecticut liaison, New England Secondary School Consortium), Mark Kostin (associate director, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Mark Kostin | mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org

How Do You Know? Ensuring Scoring Criteria are Clear and Aligned
PRESENTERS: Angela Hardy (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Katie Thompson (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Angela Hardy | ahardy@greatschoolspartnership.org

Formative Assessment and Teacher Feedback: What You Need to Know
PRESENTERS: Kate Gardoqui (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership), Ken Templeton (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)
CONTACT: Ken Templeton | ktempleton@greatschoolspartnership.org

Once again we are seeking your feedback on the conference. Please take a moment to complete our evaluation survey:

newenglandssc.org/conference/evaluation
2015 NESSC Champions

The New England Secondary School Consortium is pleased to acknowledge the effort and support from the following Champions. These six individuals have made significant contributions to the goals, objectives, and strategies of the NESSC through unique efforts promoting and implementing changes in instructional practice, passage of key policy, or enhancing public engagement and support. They have championed the ideals of the NESSC to ensure quality and equitable learning for all students, influencing all of us in this process.

Regional

Chris Sturgis is best known for her work in advancing competency education and improving life outcomes for vulnerable youth. She has provided national leadership in advancing multiple pathways to graduation and competency education. She is the Principal of MetisNet, a consulting firm based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, specializing in education, youth issues, and community engagement. Sturgis brings a commitment to drawing on local knowledge—or metis—early in the design process. She has worked for philanthropies, state governments, human-service organizations, and campaigns. She is co-founder of the Youth Transition Funders Group and writes for the Connected by 25 Blog. She is also co-founder of CompetencyWorks, which highlights advances in competency education and local leadership.

Connecticut

Dr. Alicia M. Roy has served as the New Fairfield Superintendent of Schools in New Fairfield, Connecticut, since 2010 and has been an educator for 27 years. She is a strong advocate for transforming schools to meet the needs of all learners by putting students at the center, and she is proud of the progress made in New Fairfield to graduate learners who have strong 21st century skills. Both the middle school, named 2014–2015 Middle School of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Schools, and the high school are members of the League of Innovative Schools, and have been since 2010. The innovative work in her district has led to both schools being recipients of the NextGen Personalized Learning Initiative grant.

Dr. Roy is also an appointed member of the New England Secondary School Consortium Council for Connecticut. Currently, she serves as chair of the Western Connecticut Superintendents Association and as a member of the Board of Directors for the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS). She was also a dedicated member of the Instruction Work Group for the CAPSS Educational Transformation Project in 2012 and most recently the joint committee that created the White Paper on Personalized Learning.

For the past 16 years Dr. Roy has worked in Connecticut, serving in Windsor as a high school vice principal, and in New Fairfield as high school principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. She taught English in grades 8–12 for 11 years and was department chair in Massachusetts, where she was also a finalist for State Teacher of the Year. Dr. Roy sits on the Advisory Board for the Doctor of Education in Instructional Leadership program at Western Connecticut State University. She is a member of the New Fairfield Lions Club, the New Fairfield Community Foundation’s Encore Fund, and the dmCT Thought Partners, and she has been honored both as a Big Sister of the Year in the United Way program and a National Point of Light.

Maine

Senator Brian Langley is currently serving his third term in the Maine State Senate, where he represents the people of Senate District 7. Prior to being elected to the Maine State Senate, Senator Langley served one term in the Maine House of Representatives. He has served on the Taxation Committee, the Marine Resources Committee, and the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee, for which he has also served as chair. During the 127th Maine Legislature, Senator Langley will again be serving as chair of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee and as a member of the Marine Resources Committee.

A graduate of the University of Southern Maine and Syracuse University, Senator Langley is an entrepreneur, chef, and educator. He spent more than 27 years teaching culinary arts at Hancock County Technical Center, and currently owns the Union River Lobster Pot restaurant in Ellsworth. Senator Langley is also involved in the community, volunteering with Boy Scout Troop 86, and serving as treasurer of the American Culinary Federation’s Down East Chapter.
New Hampshire

Dr. John J. Freeman currently serves as superintendent of schools for the Pittsfield School District in Pittsfield, New Hampshire, a position that he has held for six and a half years. Pittsfield is a small, rural school district located in central New Hampshire; Pittsfield’s population is approximately 4100, while the school’s enrollment is approximately 600 students in preschool through 12th grade. The district’s free and reduced price meal rate is currently about 55 percent.

The Pittsfield community has been engaged in a high school redesign project with an approach that personalizes learning for all students. The collaboration between the school and community has resulted in a design that focuses on increased academic achievement, greater student ownership for learning, 21st century skills and social-emotional learning, changing adult roles and systems, and community engagement. The schools are demonstrating growth along a range of success measures.

In his teaching, Dr. Freeman was a classroom teacher of students in grades two, four, five, six, and seven. He also served as a teacher of students identified as special needs students as well as gifted-and-talented students. In addition, he has taught at both the undergraduate and graduate college and university levels as an adjunct instructor of communications, education, and literature courses.

His service includes work in both rural and suburban schools in Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and North Dakota, in addition to more than twenty-five years of service in New Hampshire. Dr. Freeman has also served as a Boy Scout leader and youth soccer coach in his community for many years, as well as board member and board president of YMCAs.

Rhode Island

Dr. Frances Gallo is the superintendent of the Central Falls School District in Central Falls, Rhode Island. She holds a master’s degree in education and a doctorate in educational leadership. She is an experienced teacher and principal in both public and parochial schools, and she is a highly effective educational leader with 45 years of demonstrated service and commitment to increasing the student achievement of Rhode Island children. Dr. Gallo is an authentic engagement strategist who validates the voices of students, families, and the community. She has worked for many years to provide school choice to children of impoverished neighborhoods. The District Charter Compact of Central Falls intentionally promotes district-charter collaboration across five charter schools. The Central Falls community proudly embraces all school choice efforts. Dr. Gallo has supported the work of the New England Secondary School Consortium from its early stages and has shared a leadership role in the developing League of Innovative Schools work at Central Falls High School.

Vermont

Representative Johannah Donovan is an eight-term Democratic legislator from Burlington, Vermont, where she was born and raised. She graduated in 1967 from Trinity College with a bachelor’s degree in history and returned to college to earn a bachelor’s degree in education in 1987. Representative Donovan taught in middle school and worked as an adult educator for over twenty years. She has served on the boards of the Lund Family Center, the Spectrum Youth and Family Services, and the University of Vermont Board of Trustees. During her tenure in the Vermont House of Representatives, she has served on the General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee, the Education Committee, and the Ways and Means Committee, where she sits currently as ranking member. She served as chair of the Education Committee for six years, and takes particular pride in the passage of universal prekindergarten education and a statewide dual-enrollment program.
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, and Vermont, along with the Great Schools Partnership, 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 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.