



# HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN **IN ACTION**

MARCH 21-22, 2013 | NORWOOD, MA

**ALL** INNOVATION 21ST CENTURY  
**STUDENTS** SKILLSTEACHERS  
LEADERSHIP GRADUATION  
COLLEGE CAREER LEARNING  
COLLABORATION **PREPARED**  
KNOWLEDGE WORKER SEQUITY  
CREATIVITY GLOBAL CITIZENS  
COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION  
HIGHER ASPIRATIONS **FOR**  
NEW ENGLAND **SUCCESS**

# AGENDA

Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. in the Ballroom Terrace

## Thursday, March 21

- 9:00 a.m. **Pre-Conference Sessions – Ballroom Terrace** (Pre-registration required)
- 1:00 p.m. **NESSC: A Year of Accomplishments and Unstoppable Momentum – Tiffany Ballroom**
- 2:15 p.m. **State of the States – Tiffany Ballroom**
- 3:30 p.m. **Break – Ballroom Terrace + Break Stations** (1<sup>st</sup> + 2<sup>nd</sup> floors)
- 3:45 p.m. **Concurrent Sessions – Round 1** (8 sessions)
- 5:00 p.m. **Dinner on your own**
- 7:00 p.m. **Networking Activities + Cash Bar – Essex/Lennox Room + Foyer**  
Pre-registration required. A dessert buffet will be provided.

## Friday, March 22

- 7:00 a.m. **Continental Breakfast – Ballroom Terrace**
- 8:15 a.m. **Recognitions – Tiffany Ballroom**
- 9:15 a.m. **Concurrent Sessions – Round 2** (9 sessions)
- 10:30 a.m. **Break – Break Stations** (1<sup>st</sup> + 2<sup>nd</sup> floors)
- 10:45 a.m. **Concurrent Sessions – Round 3** (9 sessions)
- 12:00 p.m. **Lunch – Tiffany Ballroom + Foyer**
- 1:00 p.m. **Concurrent Sessions – Round 4** (8 sessions)
- 2:15 p.m. **Adjournment** (No closing ceremony)

# 1 Thursday, March 21

3:45 p.m. — 5:00 p.m.

ROOM	SESSION
104	From Raising the Bar to Removing the Barriers: Every Student College-Bound [Conard High School, CT]
105/106	Realizing Equity: How to Make the Idea Real [Kearsarge Regional High School, NH]
107/108	Be Honest! Are You Standards-Referenced or Standards-Based? [Cumberland High School, RI]
201	School-Based Academies: Multiple Pathways to Personalize Learning [Essex High School, VT]
202	The STEM Endorsement: A Flexible Model for Multiple Pathways [Falmouth High School, ME]
203	Mastery Lessons: Year One in Our Transition to a Mastery-Based Diploma [High School in the Community, CT]
205/206	How to Talk About Innovation: Practical Messaging Strategies for Schools [NESSC]
208/209	Community Classroom: The Newport as a Museum Project [Rogers High School, RI]

# 2 Friday, March 22

9:15 a.m. — 10:30 a.m.

ROOM	SESSION
102	World Class: The Lebanon NxGL Learning Studio [Lebanon High School, NH]
104	From Raising the Bar to Removing the Barriers: Every Student College-Bound [Conard High School, CT]
105/106	Realizing Equity: How to Make the Idea Real [Kearsarge Regional High School, NH]
107/108	Be Honest! Are You Standards-Referenced or Standards-Based? [Cumberland High School, RI]
201	School-Based Academies: Multiple Pathways to Personalize Learning [Essex High School, VT]
202	The STEM Endorsement: A Flexible Model for Multiple Pathways [Falmouth High School, ME]
203	Mastery Lessons: Year One in Our Transition to a Mastery-Based Diploma [High School in the Community, CT]
205/206	Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified: Developing Effective Curriculum Standards and Mastery Objectives [NESSC]
208/209	Community Classroom: The Newport as a Museum Project [Rogers High School, RI]

# 3 Friday, March 22

10:45 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.

ROOM	SESSION
102	World Class: The Lebanon NxGL Learning Studio [Lebanon High School, NH]
104	Bridging the Divide: Connecting Students to College and Careers [United Technologies Center, ME]
105/106	Student-Centered Transformation: One School's Journey [Burlington High School, VT]
107/108	Pathways to Success: Proficiency-Based Career Academies [Ponaganset Middle School + High School, RI]
201	Personalized Pathways to the High School Diploma [Nashua High School North, NH]
202	Ready for Life: The Power of High Expectations and Personal Learning Plans [Williamstown Middle High School, VT]
203	Better Together: Community-Driven School Change [Sanford High School, ME]
205/206	How <i>Global Best Practices</i> and NEASC Led to a Mastery-Based Diploma [New Fairfield High School, CT]
208/209	An Introduction to the League of Innovative Schools [NESSC]

# 4 Friday, March 22

1:00 p.m. — 2:15 p.m.

ROOM	SESSION
102	Creating Learning Pathways that Increase Student Engagement, Achievement, and Aspirations [NESSC]
104	Bridging the Divide: Connecting Students to College and Careers [United Technologies Center, ME]
105/106	Student-Centered Transformation: One School's Journey [Burlington High School, VT]
107/108	Pathways to Success: Proficiency-Based Career Academies [Ponaganset Middle School + High School, RI]
201	Personalized Pathways to the High School Diploma [Nashua High School North, NH]
202	Ready for Life: The Power of High Expectations and Personal Learning Plans [Williamstown Middle High School, VT]
203	Better Together: Community-Driven School Change [Sanford High School, ME]
205/206	How <i>Global Best Practices</i> and NEASC Led to a Mastery-Based Diploma [New Fairfield High School, CT]

# PLENARY SESSIONS

## PRESENTATIONS

### **NESSC: A Year of Accomplishments and Unstoppable Momentum**

Conference welcome, major milestones, and overview of the NESSC with interactive engagement with our latest resources and initiatives.

**SESSION:** Thursday, March 21 | 1:00 p.m.

**CONVENER:** David Ruff (executive director, Great Schools Partnership)

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

### **State of the States**

During this session, several leaders and commissioners of education from across the NESSC will discuss the current state of secondary-school improvement, including the way in which new and proposed policy changes are aligned with and support the efforts already underway in the League of Innovative Schools. State leaders will also describe how the Common Core State Standards and implementation of new assessments in 2014-2015 will support proficiency-based graduation, personalized learning pathways, and learner-centered accountability systems.

**SESSION:** Thursday, March 21 | 2:15 p.m.

**CONVENERS:** Mark Kostin (associate director, Great Schools Partnership), David Ruff (executive director, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Mark Kostin | mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org

### **Recognitions**

Numerous individuals have worked together across our region and within each state to advance the thoughtful and important work of graduating more students ready for college, careers, and citizenship. During this session, we will highlight many of the most critical accomplishments and recognize a few individuals who have tirelessly and effectively championed the work of the NESSC in their state and across New England.

**SESSION:** Friday, March 22 | 8:15 a.m.

**CONVENERS:** Mark Kostin (associate director, Great Schools Partnership), David Ruff (executive director, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Mark Kostin | mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org

## 1 2 From Raising the Bar to Removing the Barriers: Every Student College-Bound

To prepare all students for postsecondary education, Conard High School encourages every student to enroll in at least one college-level course before graduation. In our diverse and dynamic high school of 1,600 students, more than 75 percent of graduates have taken one or more Advanced Placement or accredited state-university courses. In this multimedia-driven session, the presenters will describe the wide range of interactive, real-world activities and outside-of-the-box strategies that helped our school promote high expectations for every student and increase postsecondary attainment. Exemplar learning expectations, professional development opportunities, and schedule and course designs will be shared. Participants will also learn how parents, teachers, and district leaders have cultivated a college-going and career-confident culture; how the school's accountability and intervention systems support all students and student subgroups; and how research-based models and resources were used to effectively promote higher expectations, more equitable academic success, and increased college enrollments.

**SCHOOL:** Conard High School, West Hartford, CT

**PRESENTERS:** Steve Bassi (teacher), Peter Cummings (principal), Julio Duarte (assistant principal), Kristin Mangini (school counselor), Tom Paleologopoulos (department chair), Marylou Shand (school counselor)

**CONTACT:** Peter Cummings | [peter\\_cummings@whps.org](mailto:peter_cummings@whps.org)

[www.conard.whps.org](http://www.conard.whps.org)

## 1 2 Mastery Lessons: Year One in Our Transition to a Mastery-Based Diploma

This session, facilitated by teachers and students, will describe how our unique school—located in the heart of a major urban area and collaboratively led by the faculty—rallied together to embrace mastery-based education, student-centered learning, and personalized instruction to meet the needs of all our students. Although we are only in the initial year of our work, we have already seen the benefits of this system—from more accurately reporting what our students are learning to dramatically enhancing our ability to provide targeted interventions and supports. Participants in this session will learn about how we report student learning, how this is informing our system of supports and interventions, and how student voice and choice is transforming our school.

**SCHOOL:** High School in the Community, New Haven, Connecticut

**PRESENTERS:** Chastity Berrios (student), Solanlly Canas, (student), Lauren Evanovich (special education teacher), Erik Good (building leader), Riley Gibbs (math teacher), Sarah Marchesi (history teacher), Matt Presser (English teacher)

**CONTACT:** Erik Good | [erik.good@new-haven.k12.ct.us](mailto:erik.good@new-haven.k12.ct.us)

[www.schools.nhps.net/hsc](http://www.schools.nhps.net/hsc)

## 3 4 How Global Best Practices and NEASC Led to a Mastery-Based Diploma

At New Fairfield High School, the arrival of the NESSC's *Global Best Practices* tool coincided with the start of our mandatory NEASC self-study process. Our faculty completed these two activities simultaneously. What resulted were not only a set of 21st-century student learning expectations, but comprehensive and thoughtful guidance on how best to structure and support learning in our school. This critical exercise has launched our efforts to implement a mastery-based diploma. Participants in this session will learn how a secondary school can facilitate both a NEASC self-study and a *Global Best Practices* review that leads to a comprehensive, multi-year strategic plan that will result in the implementation of a mastery-based diploma.

**SCHOOL:** New Fairfield High School, New Fairfield, Connecticut

**PRESENTERS:** Mariana Coelho (principal), Cynthia Risch (teacher), Carol Wantman (teacher)

**CONTACT:** Mariana Coelho | [mcoelho@new-fairfield.k12.ct.us](mailto:mcoelho@new-fairfield.k12.ct.us)

[www.newfairfieldschools.org/subsite/nfh](http://www.newfairfieldschools.org/subsite/nfh)

**1 2 The STEM endorsement: A Flexible Model for Multiple Pathways**

Falmouth High School developed three “endorsements”—seals on a transcript indicating successfully completed extended learning opportunities—that we are making available to students in the areas of STEM, fine arts, and global citizenship. The STEM endorsement was rolled out this year, with fine arts planned for 2013-2014 and global citizenship for 2014-2015. Each endorsement area allows students to meet Falmouth’s graduation requirements. In this unique workshop, participants will engage in an open discussion of the foundational principles motivating the endorsements and of the different concerns and compromises that have been faced so far. Participants will also act as critical friends to the presenters, helping them work through ongoing concerns and refine plans that are already in place. The presenters will discuss strategies for connecting outside-of-class activities with the regular curriculum, attracting a heterogeneous student population (rather than appealing only to the top ten percent of students), and ensuring that students who enter the program are passionate about the area of study.

**SCHOOL:** Falmouth High School, Falmouth, Maine

**PRESENTERS:** John Kraljic (STEM teacher), Wendy Northrup (music and chorus teacher), Nisu Seder (art teacher), Cathy Stankard (curriculum director)

**CONTACT:** Gregg Palmer | gpalmer@falmouth.org

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

**3 4 Better Together: Community-Driven School Change**

Imagine what can happen when a school system invites its community to engage in a visioning process. Imagine a systemic remodeling of the way education is delivered and imagine community members helping to make the new system a reality. Relationships change. Structures evolve. Solutions emerge. Sanford High School is working with our community to create a student-centered, proficiency-based learning system. With assistance from the Re-Inventing Schools Coalition, a collaborative professional development program is helping teachers integrate standards-based learning targets, 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, and new technologies into their instruction. Community partners provide learning spaces, internships, service-learning experiences, and extend-learning opportunities to students. Parents are taking active leadership roles in the civic life of the community and creating better opportunities for youth and families. In this session, participants will learn about the diverse strategies that Sanford High School has used to engage, inform, and partner with parents, community organizations, and local businesses—a process that has led to significant organizational, cultural, and educational change.

**SCHOOL:** Sanford High School, Sanford, Maine

**PRESENTERS:** Pam Cote (extended learning opportunities coordinator), Samantha Hansen (community liaison), Kathy McKechnie (coordinator of Sanford Out of School Time Alliance), Jedediah Petsinger (principal), Kristen Wiegand (parent coordinator for Our Schools/Our Future)

**CONTACT:** Jed Petsinger | jpetsinger@sanford.org

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

**3 4 Bridging the Divide: Connecting Students to College and Careers**

United Technologies Center launched a new pilot program that brings together the combined strengths of four educational institutions and gives students the opportunity to earn college credits while still in high school. In partnership with Hermon High School, Eastern Maine Community College, and the University of Maine, the new program assists high school students in college and career assessment, exploration, and advisement. Students are engaged in an integrated, skill-based educational experience that connects academics to real-world careers through integrated CTE labs. Students can also choose to earn an associate’s degree within twelve months of graduation, with the option of transferring into a bachelor’s degree program. Participants in this session will learn how stakeholders from high schools, career and technical centers, and institutions of higher education can forge powerful partnerships and provide highly relevant learning pathways for students that also lead to an associate’s degree.

**SCHOOL:** United Technologies Center, Bangor, Maine

**PRESENTERS:** Dwight Littlefield (Maine Department of Education), Angela Marcolini (instructor of innovative engineering, University of Maine), Brian Walsh (principal, Hermon High School), Frederick Woodman (director, United Technologies Center), Eastern Maine Community College representative

**CONTACT:** Frederick Woodman | fwoodman.utc@gmail.com

[www.utc4me.org](http://www.utc4me.org)

## 1 2 Realizing Equity: How to Make the Ideal Real

While everyone agrees that students deserve an equitable education, developing the learning environment, culture, and strategies that meet the needs of all students—while still challenging them to excel—is no easy task. During this session, representatives from Kearsarge Regional High School will discuss their heterogeneously grouped ninth- and tenth-grade teams. Presenters will describe the structure of each team, the changes that were made to the master schedule, the requirements for core courses, the differentiated instructional strategies used by teachers, the collaboration and interdisciplinary projects that drive the team-based approach, and the competencies, assessments, and layers of student support that make it all work. In this session, participants will learn the critical processes and steps needed to develop and implement powerful learning communities that support personalized learning, and in which demonstrating competencies through engaging and relevant projects is the norm.

**SCHOOL:** Kearsarge Regional High School, New London, New Hampshire

**PRESENTERS:** Peter Bianchi (math teacher), Sharon Boyle (special education teacher), James Doneski (English teacher), James Daley (principal), Katherine McCandless (science teacher), David Miller (assistant principal), Shannon Potts (English teacher), Curtis Roddy (social studies teacher), Beth Stern (guidance counselor)

**CONTACT:** James Daley | [jdaley@kearsarge.org](mailto:jdaley@kearsarge.org)

[www.kearsarge.org/krhs](http://www.kearsarge.org/krhs)

## 2 3 World Class: The Lebanon NXGL Learning Studio

Over the past year and half, Lebanon High School has been working with the New Hampshire Department of Education and the Next Generation Learning (NxGL) initiative. The goal: develop a world-class system of personalized, authentic, performance-based learning for every student that includes comprehensive support systems and anytime/anywhere learning experiences. As an NxGL Learning Studio, Lebanon is preparing today's youth for success in college, careers, and civic life by organizing teachers, students, and business leaders into teams that promote deeper learning, more effective teaching, and higher-impact community engagement. Our students are developing the core academic knowledge, collaborative problem-solving strategies, communication abilities, and lifelong learning skills that are essential for success in every area of adult life. Participants will learn the necessary steps to develop structured personalized learning pathways in which students are highly engaged in demonstrating college- and career-ready standards. In addition, participants will learn how to ensure that assessments are designed in a way that determines how well students know both content-area and 21st-century competencies.

**SCHOOL:** Lebanon High School, Lebanon, New Hampshire

**PRESENTERS:** Bonnie Robinson (ELO teacher), Nan Parsons (principal), Jason Tetu (social studies teacher)

**CONTACT:** Nan Parsons | [nparsons@sau88.net](mailto:nparsons@sau88.net)

[www.sites.google.com/a/sau88.net/lhs](http://www.sites.google.com/a/sau88.net/lhs)

## 3 4 Personalized Pathways to the High School Diploma

Nashua High School North serves the second-largest district in New Hampshire, yet our dropout rate has fallen well below the state average and we have the highest college-going rates for an urban public high school (84 percent) in the state. Despite a poverty rate that has risen above 40 percent, we have expanded enrollment in advanced courses and our students have achieved Advanced Placement exam scores that are higher than the national average. In this session, presenters will describe the many personalized pathways to graduation that have helped our students succeed academically. We will also share our plans for future programs and even stronger performance. Participants will not only learn about our diploma programs, but they will have the opportunity to reflect on the diploma policies and practices currently in place in their districts.

**SCHOOL:** Nashua High School North, Nashua, New Hampshire

**PRESENTERS:** Nicole LeClaire (guidance director), Maureen O'Dea (director of guidance, Nashua School District), David Ryan (principal), Jennifer Seusing (assistant superintendent, Nashua School District)

**CONTACT:** David Ryan | [ryand@nashua.edu](mailto:ryand@nashua.edu)

[www.nashua.edu/nhn](http://www.nashua.edu/nhn)

# PRESENTATIONS

## 1 2 Be Honest! Are You Standards-Referenced or Standards-Based?

Moving to a proficiency-based graduation system is challenging—but it's also worth it. Cumberland High School is the first secondary school in Rhode Island to overhaul grading, assessment, and reporting as it moves toward an authentic proficiency-based diploma that will prepare every graduate for college, careers, and citizenship. In this session, the presenters will discuss how secondary schools can transition from a system of credits, compliance, and chastisement to one that is based on progress and performance. Participants will leave with a set of practical steps they can use to develop measurement standards, learning targets, and common rubrics that are easily understood and implemented. The presenters will also explain how we aligned a multi-tiered support system with teacher evaluation, developed our strategic plans, and renewed our focus on data to achieve district-wide change. Community-engagement strategies, progress reports, and report-card designs will also be shared.

**SCHOOL:** Cumberland High School, Cumberland, Rhode Island

**PRESENTERS:** Bethany Coughlin (assistant principal, McCourt Middle School), Richard Drolet (principal, North Cumberland Middle School), James Field (PBIS coordinator), Chris Scott (math department chair), Alan Tenreiro (principal, Cumberland High School)

**CONTACT:** Alan Tenreiro | [alan.tenreiro@cumberlandschools.org](mailto:alan.tenreiro@cumberlandschools.org)

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## 3 4 Pathways to Success: Proficiency-Based Career Academies

Foster-Glocester Regional School District is moving toward multi-year pathways designed to prepare students for college and careers. Our comprehensive middle and high school recently established a STEM Academy pathway in grades 6–12, as well as pathways in the performing arts (music and music technology), agriculture (plant and animal science), alternative energy, and construction and cabinet-making. Additional pathways are being developed, and all of our pathways are designed to increase the rigor and relevance of course offerings and help students earn college credit or industry certifications. Our high school also requires students to demonstrate proficiency through a digital portfolio and graduation exhibition, which may be based on a student's work in advanced pathway courses. In this session, participants will learn about the design processes and principles necessary for secondary schools to take in order to develop comprehensive student learning pathways that are rigorous and relevant. In addition, participants will learn how to incorporate the support and assessment of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills.

**SCHOOL:** Ponaganset Middle School + Ponaganset High School, North Scituate, Rhode Island

**PRESENTERS:** Michael Barnes (Foster-Glocester superintendent), Greg Gongoleski (teacher and department chairperson), Patricia Marcotte (principal, Ponaganset Middle School), Sandra Nolan (principal, Ponaganset High School), Malaree Searle (teacher), Karyn Sarkis (guidance department co-chair)

**CONTACT:** Patricia Marcotte | [pmarcotte@fg.k12.ri.us](mailto:pmarcotte@fg.k12.ri.us) + Sandra Nolan | [snolan@fg.k12.ri.us](mailto:snolan@fg.k12.ri.us)

[www.fg.k12.ri.us](http://www.fg.k12.ri.us)

## 1 2 Community Classroom: The Newport as a Museum Project

The Newport as a Museum project takes advantage of the natural and cultural offerings of Newport, Rhode Island, using the city as a classroom to enhance literacy skills, engagement, and self-efficacy for 40 ninth- and tenth-grade students. Through partnerships with the Newport Preservation Society and other local organizations, students gain access and exposure to a variety of historical sites and cultural experiences. The teachers guide, instruct, and support students as they work cooperatively to explore, observe, research, record, and compile findings in a multimedia database. Supplemental readings, interviews, and media sources provide additional enrichment. The final product is a multi-genre multimedia report exploring the depth and breadth of the Newport landscape through the eyes of its teenage citizens. Participants in this workshop will learn about the theoretical basis for the project, and the organizational and logistical considerations that emerge when instruction breaks free of the traditional classroom walls.

**SCHOOL:** Rogers High School, Newport, Rhode Island

**PRESENTERS:** Zinovia Canale (English department head), Nancy Noonan (English teacher)

**CONTACT:** Zinovia Canale | [zinoviacanale@newportrischools.org](mailto:zinoviacanale@newportrischools.org) + Nancy Noonan | [nancynoonan@newportrischools.org](mailto:nancynoonan@newportrischools.org)

[www.newportrischools.org/domain/8](http://www.newportrischools.org/domain/8)

### 3 4 Student-Centered Transformation: One School's Journey

Burlington High School, a large urban high school, has transformed learning by creating ninth-grade academies, initiating one-to-one technology learning using iPads, and providing extended student-choice-driven project-based learning opportunities. These initiatives, which require a clear articulation of learning expectations and effective teacher collaboration, are informing our ongoing comprehensive school improvement efforts, as well as our journey toward implementing a proficiency-based model of learning. Participants will learn about the strategies undertaken in this large school to successfully chart the course for whole-school transformation, including supporting teacher teams, incorporating digital learning, and designing extended student-centered learning projects.

**SCHOOL:** Burlington High School, Burlington, Vermont

**PRESENTERS:** Amy Mellencamp (principal), Nick Molander (assistant principal and ninth grade academy coordinator), Gretchen Muller (biology teacher), Colby Skoglund (design technology teacher)

**CONTACT:** Amy Mellencamp | amellenc@bsdvt.org

[www.bhs.bsdvt.org](http://www.bhs.bsdvt.org)

### 1 2 School-Based Academies: Multiple Pathways to Personalize Learning

As part of its transformation process, Essex High School made a commitment to supporting students, personalizing learning, and developing multiple pathways—all within a comprehensive high school model. We began by creating academies for students interested in either the arts or the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering, and math. In 2013, our Academy of Visual and Performing Arts will enter its third year and our STEM Academy will enroll its first students. Working within the existing governance structure, Essex created integrated “schools within a school” to support student interests and aspirations through strategies such as seminars, capstone projects, master-teacher workshops, and career internships—all of which allow students to maintain a sense of belonging in the larger school community. In this session, the presenters will share their stories, successes, and struggles, and participants will learn about the leverage points we used to advance our work and the barriers our school overcame to develop and sustain our academies.

**SCHOOL:** Essex High School, Essex Junction, Vermont

**PRESENTERS:** Kim Audette (STEM director), Julian Bradshaw (AVPA director), Lea Ann Smith (STEMinar teacher), Rob Reardon (principal)

**CONTACT:** Amy Cole | acole@ccsuvt.org

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

### 3 4 Ready For Life: The Power of High Expectations and Personal Learning Plans

At Williamstown Middle High School, we have reimagined ninth grade to ensure our students are successful, well-known, supported, and enthusiastically engaged. We accomplish this by developing personal learning plans and by incorporating a variety of early and ongoing assessments that tailor our interventions and supports. This work, guided by the Common Core State Standards, is done in collaboration with multiple stakeholders in our community. Participants will learn how to implement comprehensive strategies for designing and supporting personalized learning through early assessment of foundational college- and career-readiness skills using ACT's KeyTrain Curriculum 101. Participants will also learn how to develop and manage personal learning plans that lead to relevant learning in collaboration with career and technical centers, institutions of higher education, and other community resources.

**SCHOOL:** Williamstown Middle High School, Williamstown, Vermont

**PRESENTERS:** Dennis Delena (teacher), Sandy Fitzmorris (teacher), Scott Lang (principal), Lisa Page (teacher), Alicia Rominger (learning coordinator)

**CONTACT:** Scott Lang | slang.wmhs@onsu.org

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

## 1 How to Talk About Innovation: Practical Messaging Strategies for Schools

Improving schools is hard work, but it can become even harder if miscommunication and misunderstanding give rise to avoidable crises and controversies. The support of parents, school boards, community members, and elected officials is essential to successful school improvement, but explaining the intricacies and importance of new educational models, teaching strategies, or grading practices presents an array of challenges. Becoming a strong communicator will not only make your job a little easier, but it will help you get it done more efficiently and effectively. In this session, participants will learn evidence-based strategies they can use to develop compelling, persuasive messages for a variety of audiences. The presenter will discuss effective messaging, framing, and communication strategies that are based on extensive research and optimized for school leaders and educators. Participants will also engage in a few interactive activities and leave the session with practical communication assets they can begin using immediately in their school.

**PRESENTER:** Stephen Abbott (director of communications, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Stephen Abbott | [sabbott@greatschoolspartnership.org](mailto:sabbott@greatschoolspartnership.org)

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

## 2 Proficiency-Based Learning Simplified: Developing Effective Curriculum Standards and Mastery Objectives

"The sheer number of standards is the biggest impediment to implementing standards," Robert Marzano concluded in a study of state and national standards. While the Common Core State Standards have provided more clarity and guidance for educators than ever before, school leaders and teachers still need to make critical decisions about what standards to prioritize and how to assess student learning growth and proficiency. In this session, participants will learn about the fundamental components of an effective proficiency-based teaching and learning system. Because teachers target standards as their instructional foci in a proficiency-based classroom, participants will also learn how to identify graduation standards—those skills and concepts that are at the heart of a discipline—as well as the performance indicators students must achieve to demonstrate proficiency of those graduation standards.

**PRESENTER:** Alex MacPhail (senior associate, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Alex MacPhail | [amacphail@greatschoolspartnership.org](mailto:amacphail@greatschoolspartnership.org)

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

## 3 An Introduction to the League of Innovative Schools

During this session, we will provide an overview of the NESSC's League of Innovative Schools—a network of more than 50 secondary schools across New England that are committed to achieving the goals of the Consortium and to working closely together to learn from one another and share best practices. Participants will review the elements of the partnership agreement and learn about the benefits of membership. Finally, participants will learn about—and experience—several of the tools specifically designed to support school improvement, including the Global Best Practices and our Cycle of Action.

**PRESENTER:** Mark Kostin (associate director, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** Mark Kostin | [mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org](mailto:mkostin@greatschoolspartnership.org)

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

## 4 Creating Learning Pathways that Increase Student Engagement, Achievement, and Aspirations

The creation of multiple learning pathways for students has become a driving force in the effort to increase personalization in schools. Multiple pathways can dramatically increase learning opportunities for students, but they also present a variety of logistical and leadership challenges for schools. For example, how can educators ensure that learning remains rigorous and that academic expectations are consistently applied when students are learning outside of the school walls? How do we develop successful relationships with institutions of higher education, businesses, and organizations that lead to meaningful learning opportunities for students? In this session, participants will learn about progress and opportunities in several NESSC states, while also developing strategies to enhance pathways in their own setting.

**PRESENTER:** David Ruff (executive director, Great Schools Partnership)

**CONTACT:** David Ruff | [druff@greatschoolspartnership.org](mailto:druff@greatschoolspartnership.org)

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

# 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, and Vermont 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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

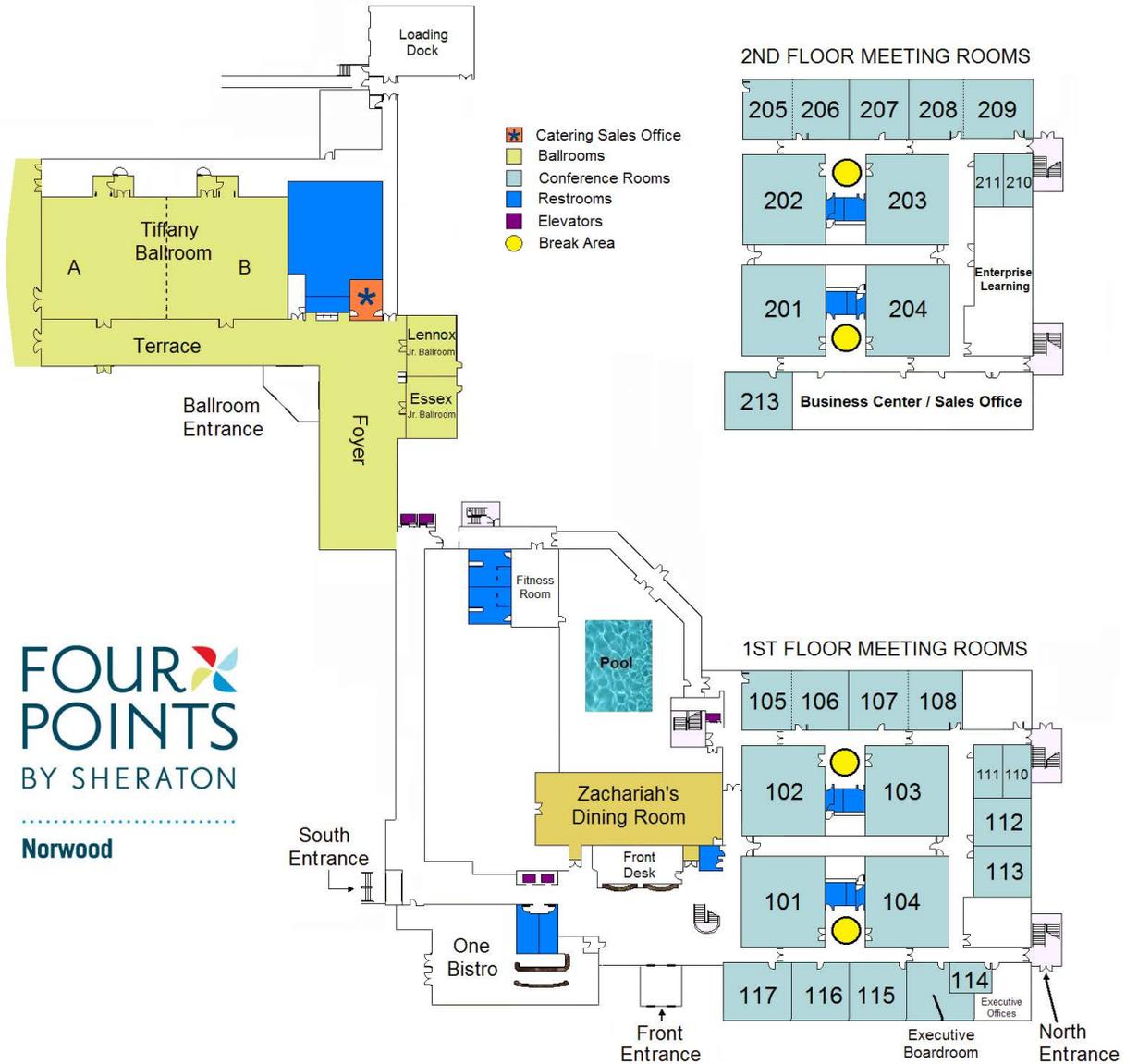
**Strong schools are the best job-creation program we have.** Imagination, expertise, creativity, entrepreneurialism—these are the assets that drive innovation, create new industries, and produce the most sought-after workers. Preparing every student for success will strengthen our economy and empower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

# NEW ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL CONSORTIUM

## Conference Map



**FOUR  
POINTS**  
BY SHERATON  
Norwood