

## Competency Based Education at Newfields Elementary School

All New Hampshire schools are required to have a plan to implement Competency Based Education by 2017. Competency Based Education has five elements:

- Students advance upon mastery
- Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives
- Assessments are meaningful and positive learning experiences for students
- Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs
- Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, and develop important skills and dispositions.

With input from the SAU 16 community and schools, SAU 16 developed a vision for our graduates:

### SAU-16 Vision for our Graduates; a Compass to Guide our Work

“Each graduate demonstrates engaged learning and citizenship through the ability to solve problems independently and collaboratively with perseverance and resilience, and communicates solutions with confidence and empathy.” (July 2016)

At NES, over the last three years, with input from staff, students and parents, we have updated our vision, mascot and motto: Our NES vision is to “empower our students to become passionate, confident, and critical learners of tomorrow with an inner-resiliency to serve others.” (June 2016) Our mascot is the NES Hawk and our motto, created and voted on by our students is “Newfield Hawks Fly for Excellence.” (Spring 2015)

One of the teaching practices NES uses to align with CBE and to focus on student ownership of learning is through the implementation of Problem Based Learning (PBL). This allows us to offer individualized, innovative instruction for all students, creating instructional shifts from teacher directed lessons to student driven lessons. When students work through authentic, real world concerns, defined by our curriculum, they develop problem solving skills while analyzing real world or student generated problems. Students work collaboratively in small groups, engaging in their problem of choice as the teacher acts as a guide or facilitator. Students work actively and collaboratively to research information, draw conclusions, and agree upon meaningful solutions which are then creatively presented to a real audience. Students are self-directed and engaged learners, questioning, collecting, organizing and synthesizing information. The 5<sup>th</sup> grade historical research project on the discovery of America, facilitated by Sarah Rosenbleeth and Matt Bennett, is an excellent example of how a unit of study does not culminate with a project; rather the project, based on the problem, becomes the learning.

The first and second grades have a 90 minute common literacy block to support student advancement to mastery. During the first thirty minutes, children learn phonics using a researched based program, Foundations. Following that they take part in skill based literacy centers based on The Daily Five model. The centers include read to self, read to someone, word work, listen to reading and work on writing (second grade). The groups are flexible and changed according to current reading skills, using Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarks. K-2 teachers continue to work once a week to improve targeted instruction, in morning Professional Learning Committees facilitated by Laurie Barr, NES RtI Integrator.

In addition, NES teams meet in Professional Learning Committees (PLC) to ensure that our assessments are meaningful and the use of data is used to inform differentiated instruction in the classroom and Target Instruction is an effective learning experience for all students. We have weekly morning PLCs and monthly afternoon PLCs intended for staff to “share the tasks of analyzing data, creating common assessment tools, and devising strategies for both students who struggle and those who

need more challenge,” to prepare targeted instruction based on current skill levels and need. (Rick DuFour)

For more information, please visit the [SAU 16 website](#) and the [NH DOE website](#) including the video: <http://education.nh.gov/assessment-systems/pace.htm>.