



New Hampshire
Department of Education
Serving New Hampshire's Education Community



NH Department of Education
Commissioner Virginia M. Barry and NH
Gov. John Lynch at May press
conference announcing the state's
selection for the Newman Award.

ATLANTA — On July 10 the NH Department of Education and the State Board of Education will receive the prestigious Frank Newman Award for State Innovation at the 2012 National Forum on Education Policy in Atlanta.

The Award recognizes the state's bold high school reforms that replace the time-based system of Carnegie units with competency-based learning and the innovation taking place in New Hampshire K-12 schools.

The Award is given by the Education Coalition of the States (ECS), the only nationwide, non-partisan education policy organization devoted to education from Pre-K to postsecondary.

“NH is being recognized in this very important way because we have aligned policy and practice in ways that support students,” notes NH Department of Education Commissioner Virginia M. Barry.

Recently, high school teachers were surveyed about, among other things, the influence of public policy in supporting student success and those teachers reported that in NH state policy is a benefit to implementation of proficiency-based graduation.*

Our graduation rate is increasing and our drop out rate is falling dramatically. Those are outcomes all educators hope to realize. In New Hampshire, it is happening. Our resources however, are limited while our needs are many. To continue our achievements, we have set very rigorous priorities. Our four priority areas are:

- Adopting standards and assessments that include advocacy about multiple ways to measure success
- Using data systems to support instruction and allow strategic improvements
- Developing great teachers and leaders and the recognition and support of them
- Bringing up the lowest achieving schools

“The criteria for the Newman Award include improved student outcomes, and bold and replicable plans that hold lessons for the rest of the nation. We should be proud as a state that our schools are receiving this well deserved recognition.”

Congratulations New Hampshire Educators!

Virginia M. Barry

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) honors New Hampshire's State Board of Education and Department of Education as the recipient of the 2012 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation. The award recognizes the state's bold goal to reduce the dropout rate to 0% by 2012 by, among other strategies, eliminating "seat time" and implementing personalized student learning.

ECS has long recognized states and territories for innovation and excellence in education policy. In 2005, ECS named its State Innovation Award in honor of the late Frank Newman, who served as ECS president for 14 years. The Frank Newman Award recognizes education improvement efforts that are replicable and hold valuable lessons for other states; policies that are bold and courageous, including new policies designed for large-scale impact; and policies or programs that have bipartisan, broad-based support.

Educators across the country have known that students learn in different ways and at different rates. New Hampshire was among the first states to tackle this challenge by replacing the "seat time" system of Carnegie units with competency-based learning. Since the 2008-09 school year, all high school students in New Hampshire earn credit based on their mastery of competencies in each course, no matter how much or little time they need. Working with their teachers, students develop a learning plan that can include traditional high school classes, online courses, postsecondary courses, customized lab work, internships, and other learning experiences.

With long-term sustainability in mind, New Hampshire's high school redesign efforts have been refined and expanded over the last 15 years. Between 1997 and 2003, the state developed and implemented an early version of the competency-based assessment system in a small number of districts. In 2004, the state received federal funding to scale up the pilot program to the entire state.

For the next two years, the state worked with principals to help them prepare for the changes. The Department of Education gathered statewide input and disseminated the vision for high school redesign to schools to help them organize and implement their own efforts. Schools also received small grants for professional development activities. Finally, the Department of Education issued six technical advisories to help schools and districts prepare for the change. As a capstone to the foundation they had built, in 2009 the state raised its compulsory education age from 16 to 18.

Transforming New Hampshire's educational system from time-based system to a learning-based system impacts student outcomes. New Hampshire's dropout rate is currently 1.19 percent. Since the 2007-2008 school year, when the state began an intensive focus on reducing the number of high school dropouts and ensuring more young people received a diploma, the dropout rate has been cut by more than 50 percent.

Since 2011, the Department has been working with the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Stupski Foundation, and the Nellie Mae Education Foundation on advancing innovative approaches to K-12 learning known as "Next Generation Learning," or NxGL. The critical attributes of Next Generation Learning are characterized by student personalization and performance-based learning. NH is part of an eight state innovative lab network (ILN) focused on teaching and learning. Additionally, New Hampshire educators have partnered with organizations such as MetrisNet and iNACOL in this work.

ECS recognizes the New Hampshire Department of Education, Board of Education, district administrators and teachers who have who worked together on this innovative and comprehensive high school reform effort. Their work honors the spirit of the late Frank Newman, and ECS is proud to recognize New Hampshire with this year's award.