



## 2018 NEW HAMPSHIRE SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNER



Since moving into a brand new school facility in the fall of 2006, Sanborn Regional H.S. has undergone the transformation from a traditional high school to one that is a nationally recognized, student-centered, and personalized model known for its ground-breaking work implementing competency based learning. In this model, it is a student's mastery of specific, transferable skills known as *competencies* in each course that ultimately determines how credits are awarded. In a competency-based model, students are continually assessed on a series of course-specific

standards related to the skills learned through each course. Rather than judge progress based on time spent in a class or tests or quizzes, the focus is more on the mastery of skills. The most important question is, “What do we expect students to know and be able to do?” Success is judged based on course and assignment-specific, as well as broad skill-based evaluation rubrics, and students not meeting course standards are given the opportunity to be re-assessed until they do.

At Sanborn, staff and the students alike are committed to sustaining a positive environment which promotes respect, academic excellence, and pride by encouraging independent thinking within a culture of collaboration. Prominently displayed in the school's atrium as students enter the front doors each day, the school's five core values permeate every aspect of the school's philosophy, programming, policy, and practice. These words, spelling out P-R-I-D-E, guide and fuel every aspect of the learning that takes place at Sanborn daily:



***Personalization:*** Developing self-identity while respecting differences in others

<b><i>Risk-Taking:</i></b>	Challenging individuals academically to develop their character
<b><i>Integrity:</i></b>	Demonstrating high standards and moral courage both in and out of the classroom
<b><i>Discovery:</i></b>	Inspiring creativity and imagination through exploration and self-expression
<b><i>Empowerment:</i></b>	Pursuing excellence with confidence

Metaphorically underpinning these traits are the “Three C’s”. These pillars guide the work being done every day to help students, staff, and the community as a whole remain laser-focused on the skills required to promote excellence and effectively support the competency-based learning model:



- Sanborn learning communities use ***Collaboration*** to advance student learning and academic performance, for which all are collectively responsible and mutually accountable.
- Sanborn students are engaged in learning tasks and performance assessments that accurately measure learning and mastery of ***Competency***.
- The Sanborn community fosters a positive school ***Culture and Climate*** for all stakeholders that promotes respect, responsibility, ambition, and pride.

Personalization is a core value, and one that is borne out from students first days through ‘Small Learning Communities’. The *Freshman Learning Community* (FLC) is a comprehensive transition program for 9th grade students entering Sanborn Regional High School. Students are assigned to one of two heterogeneously grouped and academically balanced FLC teams. Sophomores are similarly grouped into three pods of integrated teams blending English, Social Studies, and Science through several interdisciplinary units each year. Within this small learning community—commonly referred to as *The Sophomore Experience*—teachers have complete autonomy over the daily teaching schedule and instructional groupings of students.

As part of the preparation for their postsecondary plans, Sanborn Regional High School has developed an extensive career pathways exploration program for all students that includes a popular year-long career speaker series, job shadows, internships, and student driven extended-learning opportunities. Sanborn has agreements with several local colleges. Through these partnerships, over half of Sanborn graduates achieve at least one college credit during their time in high school, both at Sanborn and at the nearby Seacoast School of Technology—and many are free of charge. Participating colleges include the Community College systems of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, as well as Southern New Hampshire University.



Dozens of Sanborn students also take advantage of a culture that fosters their ability to create and receive credit for extended learning opportunities. During the 2017-18 school year, 70 students are involved in ELO’s that include culture exploration, fashion design, accounting, and dental hygiene to name a few. An internship program allows real-world experience in areas such as aviation, fire service, education, and many other areas.



Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, students in all grades received school-issued Chromebooks. Students and teachers alike now have access to the most up-to-date information and applications via the Internet, as well as curriculum materials available through the Google Classroom and Google Apps platforms. A blended-learning model has begun to infiltrate teaching and learning as technology has been integrated into lessons in a wide variety of ways impossible without universal device availability for students. While this is underway, the district has focused professional development to explore and integrate new and ever-improving ways to utilize these revolutionary tools to improve student learning.

Every day, traditional learning pauses to allow students in all grades the opportunity to extend their learning, meet with teachers for extra help, catch up on homework, pursue an interest, improve their personal fitness, meet with other members of co-curricular clubs and organizations...the list is endless. Focused Learning Time (FLT) occurs four times in each six day schedule cycle, with advisory meeting the other two days. In addition to being graded on their competencies in each course, a cumulative and evolving assessment of their work-study practices is developed. Separated from the assessment of students' academic knowledge and skill, assessment of work study practices focuses on identifying inherent qualities that are the most significant contributors to a successful learning experience. Work-study practices are assessed continually in four areas: communication, creativity, collaboration, and self-direction.

Assignment and course grades are similarly unique to the competency-based model. In each course, teachers report student proficiency in meeting both course-level competencies and school-wide academic, civic, and social competencies. Each course competency receives a letter score (rubric score) and this letter score contributes to the overall, final grade (on a four point college scale) based on the individual competency weighting established by the teacher. In order to successfully pass and receive credit for a course, a student must earn an overall course grade of 1.5 or higher (on a 4-point scale) *and* pass each individual course competency with a 1.5 or higher. Students are given the opportunity to be reassessed on summative assessments as well as retake courses as necessary.





At Sanborn, every student develops a post-secondary plan, and tracks student success at the next level. One important data point that has emerged is the college persistence rate of Sanborn graduates. This number, which represents the number of college freshmen remaining continually enrolled in a degree program through their third semester after initial enrollment was 83%, 81%, and 81% respectively for the 2013, 14, and 15 graduating classes, rates that far exceed the national average. For the last several years, the annual dropout rate of Sanborn students is less than 0.5%.

Ever-evolving, this system has been polished and refined to create a unique and highly-successful learning environment

for the children of Kingston, Newton, and Fremont, New Hampshire. Sanborn is on the leading edge of school reform both locally and at the national level, having received several honors and recognitions for the schools redesign efforts. Educators from all over the nation have visited Sanborn to learn from our educators. Looking forward, the team of educators district-wide are always seeking new and innovative ways to improve student learning and post-graduation success. A spirit of experimentation, collaboration, and risk-taking permeates. Coupled with the empowerment given to educators of all roles and experience, the next great innovative practice is likely being developed right here at Sanborn Regional High School.