



TEACHING & LEARNING NEWSLETTER

A monthly newsletter designed
for **Norwalk Educators**

Happy
holidays

COMPETENCY BASED EDUCATION

Article by Sara Kratzer

What are the hopes, dreams and aspirations our community has for our young people? What are the skills and habits of mind that our children need for success in this rapidly changing world? What are the implications for the learning experiences we provide in our classrooms? What should it take for a student to walk across the stage and earn a handshake at graduation in Norwalk?

A team of administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and students took on the challenge of trying to answer these questions and on April 22, 2019, they presented the Portrait of a Learner. Their work is vital to be able to imagine the educational outcomes our students deserve in order to be successful outside of the classroom and beyond high school. The creation of our NCSD Portrait of Learner is one of the first steps on a very long journey towards Competency-Based Education (CBE). CBE is not a curriculum, instructional strategy, initiative, or program. It is a set of elements that aim to transform traditional education systems, structures, pedagogies, policies, and culture so that all students can and will learn through authentic, rigorous experiences inside and outside of the classroom.

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Here's what's new in
this issue:

**COMPETENCY BASED
EDUCATION**

**STRATEGY
SPOTLIGHT**

**SELF-CARE BINGO
BOARD!**

**NEW TEACHER
SPOTLIGHT!**

Elements of Competency-Based Education

- 1.Students are empowered daily to make important decisions about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will demonstrate their learning.
- 2.Assessment is a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence.
- 3.Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
- 4.Students progress based on evidence of mastery, not seat time.
- 5.Students learn actively using different pathways and varied pacing.
- 6.Strategies to ensure equity for all students are embedded in the culture, structure, and pedagogy of schools and education systems.
- 7.Rigorous, common expectations for learning (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) are explicit, transparent, measurable, and transferable.

Levine, E. & Patrick, S. (2019). [What is competency-based education?](#) An updated definition. Vienna, VA: Aurora Institute.

Some very brave secondary teachers have jumped into the deep end of the CBE swimming pool. They see how their personal philosophies about teaching and learning connect with the CBE elements and they are beginning to make significant shifts in their courses and practices. In these classrooms you will hear less teacher talk and more teacher-student conferencing, see less whole class instruction and more mini lessons, less teacher direction and more students self-monitoring the work they have planned for themselves, and sense less of a focus on grades and more importance placed upon the process of learning. These teachers have come a long way in making shifts to more closely align to CBE elements, but we have much more work to be done to bring Competency-Based Education to life for Norwalk students.It is impossible to capture the complexity of the CBE work in a short article. When it is safe, these secondary teachers will welcome visitors, but until then reach out with questions and curiosities. For some teachers there is an audio or video link to a reflection of their CBE experiences.





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“For students to really move at their own pace, we [NCSd] will need to change the school calendar...our daily schedules...how we report learning. We need a CBE vision for Norwalk. What do we want the [CBE] elements to look like in our community?”

Greg Rivers, NHS ELA Teacher

*Genglinomics is a two semester course that integrates the learning of Government, Economics, and ELA12.

CLICK HERE to View Videos!

Chanda Hassett <i>6-8 Lead Learner</i> Accelerated ELA7	Carla Eakins  <i>9-12 Lead Learner</i> ELA10	Kylie Haggerty  ELA10	Julie Kernes  ELA10	Greg Rivers ELA10 & ELA11
Jen Sutherland  Special Education ELA Genglinomics*	Laura Cipolla Special Education ELA	Michelle Wehrman-Flores ELA Genglinomics*	Ryan Alfred Social Studies Genglinomics*	Nancy Hanson <i>9-12 Special Education</i> <i>Lead Learner</i> Genglinomics*

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT: THE STAND-UP GAME AND STICKS & SPOONS



The Stand-Up Game:

This is a quick, no-prep strategy that gets your kids out of their seats and encourages participation. The strategy is simple, kids stand up and once they share a thought/response/answer/idea to the prompt the teacher posed, they can sit down.

Sarah Brown-Wessling has a video on The Teaching Channel using this strategy if you'd like to watch it in action.

Sticks & Spoons:

This strategy can be used when students are working in groups and encourages both positive interdependence and individual accountability. The teacher assigns each group a color (you can give them colored paper or simply write the color on a notecard). The teacher has a stick for each group with the color on it (written or colored). Each group member is assigned a number and the teacher has numbered spoons.

To call on a student for a response, the teacher draws a stick (which group) and a spoon (which student). The student who was picked must answer, but they can, if needed, collaborate with their group before responding.

There is a video on The Teaching Channel if you'd like to see this strategy in action.

SELF-CARE BINGO BOARD

Self-care is important in order to maintain a healthy relationship with yourself. Self-care can boost your confidence and self-esteem as well as transmit positive feelings to others. Take some time in the month of December to practice self-care. You can use this Bingo Board to monitor your self-care independently, with an accountability partner, or as a fun challenge within your PLC!



Read a book.	Create a bucket list.	Schedule some personal time.	Celebrate an achievement--big or small!	Sleep in!
Make time to catch up with a friend or two.	Spread a positive message on social media.	Learn a new joke.	Take some time to exercise or try a new way to exercise.	Take a break from technology.
Watch a <u>favorite</u> movie.	Host a virtual family/friend gathering.	Choose your own adventure. :)	Write a letter to a loved one.	Perform a random act of kindness for a stranger.
Abandon your to-do list after completing the essentials.	Make a playlist of your favorite songs.	Try something new.	Make a gratitude list.	Make no plans for one day over the weekend.
Listen to a podcast.	Try a new recipe.	Leave a note of encouragement for a colleague.	Complete a puzzle.	Make time for a favorite hobby.

NEW TEACHER SPOTLIGHT



JENNIFER BRANDT

K-1 Art
Oviatt Elementary School

Jennifer Brandt, a graduate of the University of Northern Iowa, is Oviatt Elementary's new K-1 Art teacher this year. Jennifer has sixteen years of experience and has worked in the Colfax Mingo, Waukee, and Spencer school districts prior to landing in Norwalk. When she isn't helping kindergarten and first graders hone their art skills, you might find Jennifer fishing, shopping, or hanging out with family and friends (socially distanced, of course!). Jennifer has enjoyed the supportive nature of administration and her colleagues as she navigates her new district and school. Welcome, Jennifer! We're glad you are a Warrior!



KATIE STEWART

3rd Grade
Orchard Hills Elementary

Although Katie Stewart is new to the 3rd grade team at Orchard Hills this year, she isn't new to teaching or to Norwalk. Katie is a NHS graduate who made her way back home after teaching in Montezuma for two years and Indianola for the past four years. A graduate of the University of Northern Iowa, Katie loves to spend time with her family when she isn't at school. She has two children, ages one and two, who keep her extremely busy. One of their favorite places to visit is the zoo. Katie says one of her favorite things about teaching in Norwalk so far is the community feeling. She says she can already tell that no matter which role you play in Norwalk - the focus is always on the kids. Welcome home, Katie! Norwalk students are fortunate to have you!



MYRANDA JOHNSON

4th Grade ELA/Social Studies
Lakewood Elementary

If you've been around Lakewood Elementary this year you may have noticed that the 4th grade team has a couple of new faces. One of them is Myranda Johnson. Myranda comes to Lakewood fresh out of Iowa State University. She is a first year teacher on the ELA/Social Studies PLC this year. When she isn't teaching 4th grade, you might find Myranda doing craft projects. She enjoys spending her free time painting, decorating homes, drawing, cutting, and laminating things...if it has to do with crafts, she enjoys it. Myranda feels fortunate to be at Lakewood and in Norwalk because of all of the amazing support she has received. She says she knows she can turn to anyone if she needs something. Myranda, you are right, and the Warrior family is so happy you are here!



JAIME DURBIN

7th Grade ELA
Norwalk Middle School

Norwalk Middle School was thrilled to add Jaime Durbin to their ranks just a couple of days before students arrived in August. Jaime, a Grandview University graduate, is a first year teacher and is part of the 7th Grade ELA team at NMS. She is a movie fiend who also loves to travel. If you see her around, ask her about some of her favorite movies or places to travel. Jaime immediately felt welcome in Norwalk, especially by her 7th grade team who has given her so much support. Welcome to the Warrior family, Jaime!

NEW TEACHER SPOTLIGHT



TERRY VOSS

Industrial Technology, Construction & Woods Technology
Norwalk High School

By now, many of you have probably had the chance to meet the newest addition to the High School CTE department. Terry Voss, a Grandview College graduate with fifteen years of teaching experience, is teaching Industrial Technology and Construction & Woods Technology this year at Norwalk High School. Prior to coming to Norwalk, Terry taught Industrial Technology in Saydel for three years and Art in the Des Moines Public School District for ten years. In his spare time, Terry spends time in his shop at home doing wood carving and woodworking projects. He also completes a New York Times crossword puzzle every day. Terry has enjoyed his transition to NHS and said the students and staff have been welcoming and supportive in these trying times. Welcome to Norwalk, Terry!



Teaching & Learning Department

Dawn Schiro, Shelly Vroegh, Nicole Linderman,
Christie Beving, Lauren Phillips

