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For Immediate Release

**Seven Organizations, Schools and Districts Receive Nearly \$1 Million in Awards from
Nellie Mae Education Foundation for Work on Proficiency-Based Pathways**

Funded efforts support advancing students through high school at their own pace

As part of its efforts to prepare all of New England's learners with the skills and knowledge they need for success in postsecondary education, work and life, the **Nellie Mae Education Foundation** (NMEF) has awarded one-year grants to seven organizations, schools, and districts across New England. The grants were issued through NMEF's [Research and Development Initiative](#) with funding from the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**.

Proficiency-Based Pathways allow students to progress toward their goals based on mastery rather than a required number of hours spent in a classroom. These pathways represent a significant move towards learning opportunities that allow students to achieve proficiency at their own pace. Proficiency-Based Pathways enable students to show deeper levels of understanding and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to indicate content mastery.

The organizations, schools and districts receiving Proficiency-Based Pathways grants are:

- [Big Picture Learning](#) – CT and VT Locations
- [Boston Day and Evening Academy](#) – Boston, MA
- [Third Sector New England](#) in coordination with [Diploma Plus](#) – MA and RI Locations
- [Expeditionary Learning/Casco Bay High School](#) – Casco Bay, ME
- [Maine School Administrative District 15](#) – Gray and New Gloucester, ME
- [National Center on Education and the Economy/CREC Schools](#) - Windsor, CT
- [Vergennes Union High School](#) – Vergennes, VT

Grant amounts range from \$74,000 - \$185,000. Specific amounts and brief descriptions of each recipient's grant-related work are available on the [NMEF website](#).

The grants are the cornerstone of NMEF's Proficiency-Based Pathways project and are managed by the organization's Research and Development department. The project is designed to build understanding of mastery-based approaches, as well as learn from both grantees' past experience and their upcoming implementation of a wide variety of projects that will be supported over the coming year.

“These grants are intended to support a dual emphasis on learning and doing,” said Beth M. Miller, Ph.D. [Director of Research and Evaluation at NMEF](#). “We’re excited to help advance the work being done by these organizations and at the same time learn a lot about this emerging field.”

The Foundation will share what is learned with interested stakeholders in the education and philanthropic communities, where interest in these approaches has grown quickly in recent years.

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is the largest charitable organization in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The Foundation supports the promotion and integration of student-centered approaches to learning at the middle and high school levels across New England. To elevate student-centered approaches, the Foundation utilizes a three-part strategy that focuses on: developing and enhancing models of practice; reshaping education policies; and increasing public understanding and demand for high quality educational experiences. The Foundation's new initiative areas are: District Level Systems Change; State Level Systems Change; Research and Development; and Public Understanding. Since 1998, the Foundation has distributed over \$123 million in grants. For more information, visit www.nmefdn.org