



**NEW LIBERTY**  
INNOVATION SCHOOL

*Welcome all. Challenge yourself. Create a positive impact.*

# NLIS Competency Handbook

## **A student-family guide to Competency-based Education**

School Year 2017-2018

## Welcome!

Welcome to the Competency Handbook: A Student and Family Guide to Competency-based Education! This Handbook outlines the important things you need to know in order to understand how our competency-based learning model works so that you can be successful in our school.

## What is “competency-based” education?

**Competency-based education is an approach to learning that requires students to master the skills and knowledge at one level before they can advance to the next level.** Why? Because we want to make sure every student has a strong foundation of knowledge and skills to build on as the youth progresses through school and prepares for life after graduation.

In traditional schools, students are grouped based on their age, and they progress through school based on *time* (the “school year”). In competency-based schools, students progress through school based on their *learning*. Your age will never hold you back, and you don’t have to wait for the next school year to begin before you can move on to the next level of work. You can advance to the next level - and earn “competencies” toward graduation - as soon as you show mastery of skills!

We are working hard to make sure our school is a place where you can learn at your own pace, where you can explore your interests, where you can plan and prepare for your future, and where you can get the individual supports you need. We want to make the most of the time that we have with you! And we want you to know that everything you are expected to do has one main purpose: *to help prepare you for your future.*

**Our goal is that you will graduate from high school fully prepared for your next step in life -- whatever you want that to be.** College? A job? An internship? Travel? If you’re not sure, that’s OK! We want to help you figure that out, too. And if you stay with us for the journey, you’ll have three, four, maybe five years (if you need it!) to figure that out. Are you ready?

Let’s begin.

## What are competencies?

Competencies are the essential skills and knowledge of college and career readiness. In other words, competencies are the specific skill-sets you'll need to master in order to make sure you graduate from high school ready for the first year of college or an entry-level job. Our competencies are based on research that has identified the most important skills, knowledge, and "essential habits" that you'll need in order to be successful after high school.

Each subject area - like English, Math, Science, etc - has its own set of competencies. This means that any time you take an English course, you'll be working on your English competencies. Anytime you take a Science course, you'll be working on your Science competencies. Take a look at the example below:

### Subject Areas

English (ELA)
History (Hist)
Active Citizen (Act)
Math (Math)
Science (Sci) 1. Scientific Investigations (Seminar) 2. The Meaning of Life 3. Genetics 4. Evolution 5. Into the Wild 6. Environment Ecosystems 7. Introduction to Physics *(Ext) Waking the Dead, BioMedical, Chemistry, Anatomy & Physiology
Professional Readiness (PR)
Essential Habits (EH)
Extension (Ext)

Each subject area has its own set of competencies.

For example, Science has seven required competencies with the option of "extension competencies".



You can see on the diagram on page 3 that the subject area of Science (Sci) has seven competencies that are required. When you show skills/knowledge at the *Basic Competent* level or higher, you will earn that competency! There are four tiers of grading, Emerging, Basic Competent, Competent, Highly Competent. We'll dive into that more later on in this handbook.

**All competencies are made up of skills called benchmarks.** Put simply, each competency is a set of benchmarks. Here is an example for the Science competency SCI.1: "Scientific Investigations." Can you figure out how many benchmarks there are in this competency by looking at the example below?

Each competency has a set of skills, we call them "benchmarks".

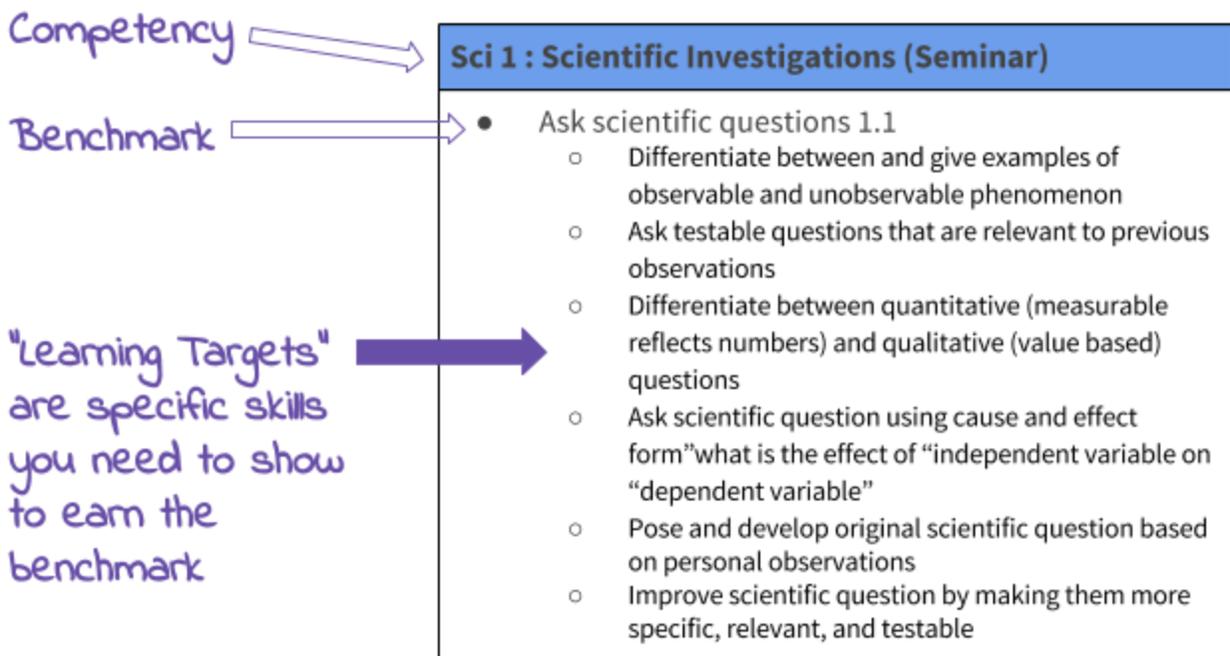


#### Sci 1 : Scientific Investigations (Seminar)

- Ask scientific questions 1.1
- Construct a scientific hypothesis 1.2
- Design and construct scientific investigations to test a hypothesis 1.3
- Accurately collect data in appropriate tables and represents data using appropriate charts 1.4
- Analyze data to identify patterns 1.5
- Use data to draw conclusion regarding scientific hypothesis and recommends future actions 1.6

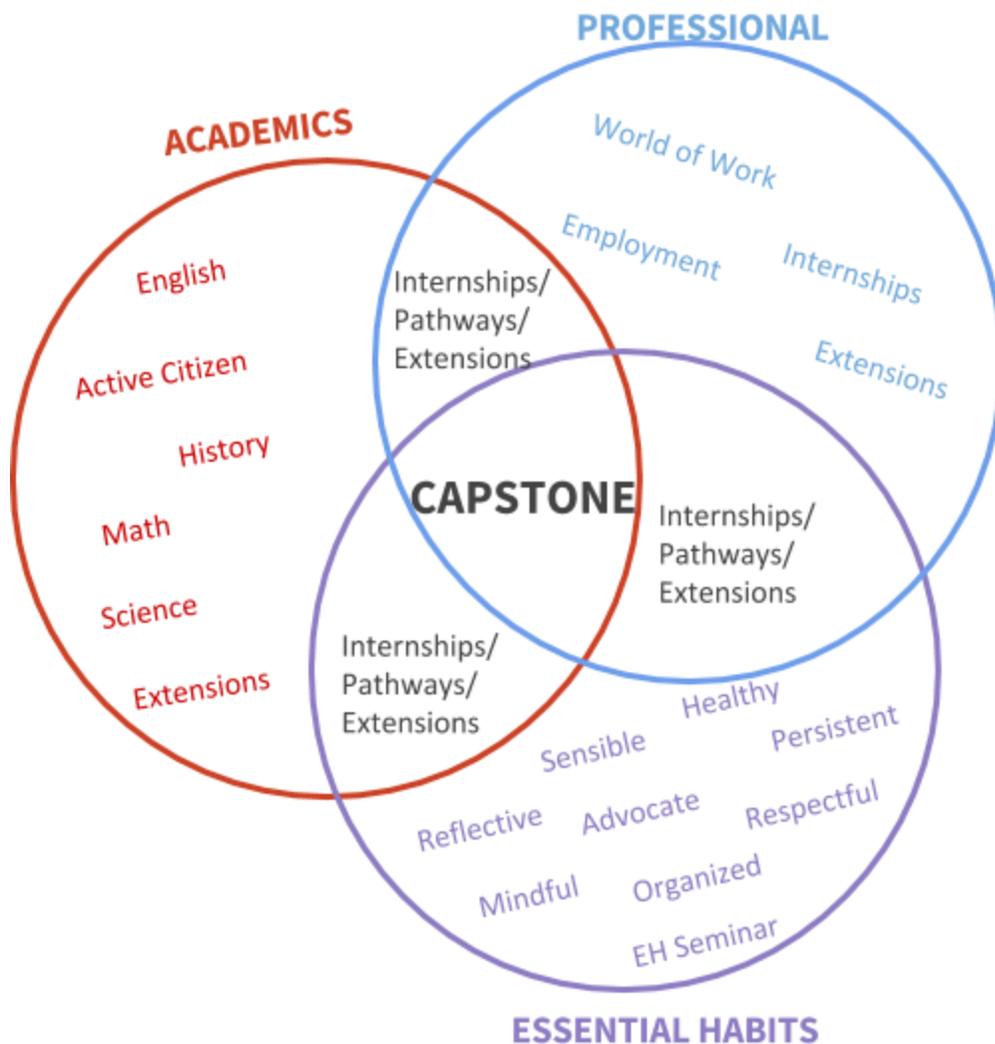
That's right. There are six benchmarks that make up Scientific Investigations (Seminar). Each benchmark is labeled with 1.1 - 1.6. The 1 indicates it is **Sci 1 Competency** and the **.1 through .6 indicate the benchmarks in the Sci 1 competency.**

**Under each benchmark there are learning targets.** The learning targets are specific skills that you are required to show knowledge at least at a basic competent level (BC).



## We have THREE PILLARS of competencies at NLIS!

Students work towards skills or competencies, in academic, social-emotional, and workplace subjects, which creates a well-rounded program of study. We refer to those as our **three pillars of competencies**. Below is a diagram locating the competencies in their “pillar”. We will discuss each pillar in more detail. Here is an overview.



In order to graduate from New Liberty, you will need to have **eight consecutive weeks of employment or an internship**. You will work on your employable skills through our World of Work class, where you will learn aspects of being professional in the workplace. Your final “competency” to complete will be Capstone class. You will learn more about Capstone later in the handbook.

## Subject Areas

Every student is required to complete at least eight weeks of employment or internship. These are treated as "competencies".

English (ELA)
History (Hist)
Active Citizen (Act)
Math (Math)
Science (Sci)
Professional Readiness (CCR) 1. World of Work 2. Employable / Internships 3. Post Grad Application 4. Capstone
Essential Habits (EH)
Extensions (Ext)

We believe success derives from successful habits, which is why we focus on creating habits for future growth. You will receive an education in forming the successful habits and *21st Century learning skills* you will take with you into the working world and beyond to become productive in both personal and professional settings. We have eight competencies that will be evaluated in every learning context - not just one course or subject area. **We call them “Essential Habits”.**

## Subject Areas

English (ELA)
History (Hist)
Active Citizen (Act)
Math (Math)
Science (Sci)
Professional Readiness (PR)
Essential Habits (EH) 1. Essential Habits Seminar 2. Mindful 3. Sensible 4. Healthy 5. Organized 6. Respectful *Ext: Persistent, Reflective, Advocate
Extensions (Ext)

Essential Habits have five required competencies, some are classes, others you will demonstrate competence in a variety of ways. You will first learn about our school and Essential Habits in the EH Seminar class, which is required when you start at NLS.

## 21st Century Learning Skills

We integrate the following skills throughout our Essential Habits, Academics, and Professional competencies:

**Communication - Collaboration - Critical Thinking - Creativity**

# Advisory

## *What is it?*

**Advisory** is a bit like a homeroom or your home base. Every advisory is run by two staff members and you will stay with your same advisory for most of your time at NLIS. This is an opportunity for you to have a family-like atmosphere at school with two caring adults to provide extra support and coaching to you. Being in a competency-based school is different and we know that students do well when they have small, personalized experiences that help to support learning and progress through the ILP. This home base (**Advisory**) will help you to set goals for moving through high school in a successful manner. Your advisors will be in regular contact with your parents/guardian to keep them informed on your progress and to help better understand you.

## *What will you do in advisory?*

- **Circles and other community-building events**
- Progress updates and class changes
- **Engage in activities to earn Essential Habits competencies**
- Time to unwind and relax
- **Employment related tasks**
- Finish up school work from other classes
- **Advocacy and community service projects (A Service Learning Project - a REQUIREMENT to graduate!)**

You will also have fun and learn social-emotional skills and work on tasks related to employment building evidence toward your graduation!

## What are Extension Competencies?

We have **Extension Competencies** built into our Graduation Roadmap. Extension competencies are opportunities for you to “extend” your learning in areas specific to your interests. Do you love science? Then you can take “**Extension Competencies**” like *Chemistry or Waking the Dead!* Or are you the next Stephen King? Then you would take a class like *Creative Writing* as an Extension Competency. To compare to traditional school, *Extension Competencies are like electives*. They are not required, however, you will take some based on your interests.

## Pathways and Internships?

Are you interested in learning a specific trade or other college and career opportunities you never imagined available to you in high school? Pathway education approach integrates your academics with a sequence high quality career-technical education and work based learning. **This year we are excited to have a BioMedical Pathway!**

If BioMedical isn't something you are interested in. That's okay. You can work with our Career Coach and look for **internships** in a field you are interested in. We believe that the more you are personally directing your own path in high school the more engaged and meaningful your education will be!

our goal at NUIS is for YOU to be engaged in your education!

## Finally Capstone!

Destination Graduation! Our Capstone is something special! **Capstone is your final competency** you are required to complete at NLIS and your last step before you graduate. Capstone occurs two times during the school year, during the December Symposium and Trimester 3. Capstone gives you the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and skills you have gained during your time at New Liberty. You will develop a portfolio that demonstrates your growth as a student and the next steps for you. Your *capstone project* will be to show the integration, reflection and importance of all three pillars and how they relate to your past, present and future in a formal presentation to the NLIS community. **Capstone is a time we celebrate YOU and your journey!**

