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Hopatcong Borough Schools

Press Release

Hopatcong Teachers Engage in Problem Based Learning During Their 11/8/16 District Wide In-Service

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Cynthia Randina, Hopatcong Superintendent of Schools, Announces

Hopatcong teachers engage in performance based learning tasks applying 21st century skills of creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking using mobile devices during their in-service professional development day. The purpose of the in-service workshop was to experience first-hand problem based learning tasks (PBLs), solving real world problems using multiple resources including the use of Chromebooks.

During the workshop, teachers were introduced to PBLs as a means to engage students in developing higher order thinking skills. Teachers heard from experts in the field, namely the keynote speaker, Dr. Reece who introduced *Defined Stem*, a web based tool consisting of Problem Based Learning Tasks. Additional presenters included educators from Virginia Beach Public Schools, Kathleen Niehoff and Meghan Raftery who shared their expertise and professional experience in problem based learning.

A fun and interesting part of the day had teachers acting as students, as district teachers who serve as various district articulators, led the teachers through a PBL lesson on designing backpacks. But the catch is, the backpacks had to be used in a given geological environment, or possibly from another era. The teams had to problem solve and design the backpacks using only resources available from those areas or time periods. Groups couldn't share what they were working on with another group. Each group had to "sell" their backpack, as the rest of the group guessed where the backpack would be used and during what time period. The teachers used a new program that will be introduced into lesson planning called DEFINED STEM, which integrates multiple subject areas across all grade levels. Implementing this new program in the district will ultimately raise the levels of student engagement and positively impact student learning.







