

Project Adventure in Newtown Public Schools

Project Adventure is an adventure-based experiential learning program developed by the Project Adventure nonprofit organization in Beverly, MA (www.pa.org). Reed Intermediate School, Newtown Middle School, and Newtown High School have Project Adventure programs.

- At Reed Intermediate, all students in grades 5 and 6 have a Project Adventure rotation.
- At NMS, all students in grades 7 and 8 have Project Adventure units in their Physical Education classes. NMS has both an outdoor ropes course and indoor challenge elements in the small gym. NMS regularly offers after school Project Adventure activities.
- At NHS, all 9th grade students have a Project Adventure unit in their Physical Education course. Students in grades 10-12 can also take a semester-long Project Adventure elective. NHS has an extensive new outdoor challenge course (installed in Fall 2017) with both high ropes and low ropes elements. The auxiliary gym also has indoor elements.

The NHS course is also available for use by sports teams, youth organizations, and other nonprofit organizations for team building and social emotional learning opportunities. For more information, contact Jeremy O'Connell at NHS (oconnellj@newtown.k12.ct.us).

The Project Adventure curriculum is based on the K-12 Adventure Curriculum for Physical Education (ACPE). The ACPE meets the National Standards for Physical Education and infuses positive risk taking, social and emotional learning, and team building skills into every lesson.

Key concepts in the curriculum include:

- The Experiential Learning Cycle. Students have a concrete, hands-on learning experience, observe and reflect, form generalizations about the experience, and transfer the learning to new situations at home or at school.
- Full Value Contract. The group agrees on a set of expected behaviors to support the achievement of individual and group goals.
- Challenge by Choice. Students are given difficult challenges in an environment of support, trust, and caring. All participants choose how to participate and at what level of challenge.

The curriculum does not depend solely on the ropes course elements. SEL concepts in the curriculum can be applied in other classroom settings. Project Adventure creates a common vocabulary and an experiential approach to SEL and provides strategies that all teachers and staff can apply in their own learning environments. Through Project Adventure, students develop many social and emotional skills, including the following:

- Responsible personal and social behavior.
- Understanding and respecting differences.
- Decision-making skills - setting goals, taking appropriate risks, enjoying challenges, and problem solving.
- Strong communication, teamwork and leadership skills.