



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.  
COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**VISITING TEAM REPORT**

**Brien McMahon High School**

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Norwalk, CT 06854 USA

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*Principal*

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Berlin High School  
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Windsor Locks High School  
*Assistant Superintendent*  
*Assistant Chair*

**05/15/2016 - 05/18/2016**

# STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

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## THE DISTRIBUTION, USE, AND SCOPE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report to be a privileged document submitted by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges to the principal of the school and by the principal to the state department of education. Distribution of the report within the school community is the responsibility of the school principal. The final visiting committee report must be released in its entirety within sixty days (60) of its completion to the superintendent, school board, public library or town office, and the appropriate news media.

The prime concern of the visiting committee has been to assess the quality of the educational program at this school in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting committee.

# **STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION**

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The Committee on Public Secondary School's Standards for Accreditation serve as the foundation for the accreditation process and by which accreditation decisions are made. The seven Standards are qualitative, challenging, and reflect current research and best practice. The Standards, written and approved by the membership, establish the components of schools to ensure an effective and appropriate focus on teaching and learning and the support of teaching and learning.

## **Teaching and Learning Standards**

**Core Values and Beliefs About Learning**

**Curriculum**

**Instruction**

**Assessment of and for Student Learning**

## **Support Standards**

**School Culture and Leadership**

**School Resources for Learning**

**Community Resources for Learning**

# CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*Effective schools identify core values and beliefs about learning that function as explicit foundational commitments to students and the community. Decision-making remains focused on and aligned with these critical commitments. Core values and beliefs manifest themselves in research-based, school-wide 21st century learning expectations. Every component of the school is driven by the core values and beliefs and supports all students' achievement of the school's learning expectations.*

1. The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.
2. The school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social and civic competencies. Each expectation is defined by specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement.
3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations.
4. The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

# CURRICULUM

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21st century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21st century learning expectations. The curriculum includes a purposefully designed set of course offerings, co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. The curriculum reflects the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The curriculum is collaboratively developed, implemented, reviewed, and revised based on analysis of student performance and current research.*

1. The curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The curriculum is written in a common format that includes:
  - units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills
  - the school's 21st century learning expectations
  - instructional strategies
  - assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.
3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
  - inquiry and problem-solving
  - higher order thinking
  - cross-disciplinary learning
  - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
  - informed and ethical use of technology.
4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.
5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.
7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

# INSTRUCTION

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Instruction is responsive to student needs, deliberate in its design and delivery, and grounded in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Instruction is supported by research in best practices. Teachers are reflective and collaborative about their instructional strategies and collaborative with their colleagues to improve student learning.*

1. Teachers' instructional practices are continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by:
  - personalizing instruction
  - engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning
  - engaging students as active and self-directed learners
  - emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
  - applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
  - engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
  - integrating technology.
3. Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by:
  - using formative assessment, especially during instructional time
  - strategically differentiating
  - purposefully organizing group learning activities
  - providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.
4. Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by:
  - using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments
  - examining student work
  - using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents
  - examining current research
  - engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.
5. Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices.

# ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

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## Teaching and Learning Standard

*Assessment informs students and stakeholders of progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations. Assessment results are shared and discussed on a regular basis to improve student learning. Assessment results inform teachers about student achievement in order to adjust curriculum and instruction.*

1. The professional staff continuously employs a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
  - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families
  - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community.
3. Professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement.
4. Prior to each unit of study, teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.
5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as corresponding rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement.
6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.
7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.
8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.
9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.
10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
  - student work
  - common course and common grade-level assessments
  - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
  - standardized assessments
  - data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
  - survey data from current students and alumni.
11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

# SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

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## Support Standard

*The school culture is equitable and inclusive, and it embodies the school's foundational core values and beliefs about student learning. It is characterized by reflective, collaborative, and constructive dialogue about research-based practices that support high expectations for the learning of all students. The leadership of the school fosters a safe, positive culture by promoting learning, cultivating shared leadership, and engaging all members of the school community in efforts to improve teaching and learning.*

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.
2. The school is equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
3. There is a formal, on-going program(s) or process(es) through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
4. In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff:
  - engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning
  - use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices
  - dedicate formal time to implement professional development
  - apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
5. School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning.
6. The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students.
7. Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students.
8. The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.
9. Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership.
10. Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning.
11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

# SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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## Support Standard

*Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of coordinated programs and services. These resources enhance and improve student learning and well-being and support the school's core values and beliefs. Student support services enable each student to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.*

1. The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.
2. The school provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services.
3. Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student.
4. School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - deliver a written, developmental program
  - meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
  - engage in individual and group meetings with all students
  - deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
5. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
  - use an appropriate referral process
  - conduct ongoing student health assessments
  - use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
6. Library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum
  - provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum
  - ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
  - are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning
  - conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.
7. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
  - collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
  - provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students
  - perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to

improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

# COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

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## Support Standard

*The achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations requires active community, governing board, and parent advocacy. Through dependable and adequate funding, the community provides the personnel, resources, and facilities to support the delivery of curriculum, instruction, programs, and services.*

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
  - a wide range of school programs and services
  - sufficient professional and support staff
  - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
  - a full range of technology support
  - sufficient equipment
  - sufficient instructional materials and supplies.
2. The school develops, plans, and funds programs:
  - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
  - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
  - to keep the school clean on a daily basis.
3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
  - programs and services
  - enrollment changes and staffing needs
  - facility needs
  - technology
  - capital improvements.
4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.
5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.
6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.
8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

# School and Community Summary

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## School and Community Summary

Norwalk, Connecticut, is a twenty-three square mile coastal city located in Fairfield County in the southwestern part of the state. When including Norwalk's islands, the city's area is 36.3 square miles. Settled in 1651, Norwalk eventually became a city in 1913. It is surrounded by New Canaan and Darien to the west, Wilton to the north, Long Island Sound to the south, and Westport and Long Island Sound to the east. Based on the U.S. Census of 2010, the diverse community of Norwalk is comprised of 68.7% White, 14.2% African American, 0.4% American Indian and Alaska Native, 4.8% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 24.3% Hispanic or Latino, and 2.8% of two or more races. Its estimated total population for 2014 is 88,145 (U.S. Census, 2014 estimate). From 2000 to 2014, there was approximately a 6.2% increase in the city's population, from 82,951 to 88,145.

Norwalk is home to a number of varied businesses. Based on the generation of sales tax, Norwalk's retail sector is the fifth largest in Connecticut. The retail sector includes businesses such as Walmart, Costco, Home Depot, and Kohl's. Rapidly growing technology companies like Priceline.com, WebMediaBrands, Adepra, and Datto Inc. are also located in Norwalk. Major employers in the city include Norwalk Health Services and Norwalk Hospital, Stew Leonard's, MBI, Diageo North America, Bridgewater Associates, and Hewitt Associates. There are also a number of companies who maintain their headquarters in Norwalk such as Pepperidge Farm, XEROX Corporation, Knipschildt Chocolatier, and Graham Capital Management.

As of May 2015, the Norwalk unemployment rate was 4.70% in comparison to Fairfield County's 7.6% and the state's 5.6%. Norwalk reports a median family income of \$76,384 with a poverty level of 8%. Between 2008 and 2012, 89.6% of adults 25 years or older earned a high school diploma or higher and 40% or more attained a Bachelor's Degree or higher. Between 2008 and 2012, the median home price in Norwalk was \$440,700 compared to the state's \$285,900.

The approved FY 2015-2016 budget for the city of Norwalk is \$326,989,609 of which \$170,987,857 was allocated for education, representing 52.3% of the total budget. Of the \$170,987,857 allocated for education, \$11,275,807 comes from the state Education Cost Sharing (ECS) formula, and \$159,712,050 comes from tax revenue.

The Norwalk Public School District includes twelve elementary schools, four middle schools, two high schools and one alternative high school. Additionally, there are several private and parochial schools located in Norwalk. The estimated student enrollment in all schools is 12,136. Of those students enrolled in public and independent schools, 11,254 were enrolled in the Norwalk Public Schools in 2015-2016. It was not possible to determine how many Brien McMahon High School age students attended private or independent schools given the number of non-public schools present in Fairfield County. Norwalk Public Schools has experienced multiple changes in leadership over the last ten years, including seven superintendents. Faculty has expressed concern regarding issues concerning consistency.

Students from Rowayton, Fox Run, Brookside, Kendall, and Columbus Magnet Elementary Schools feed into Roton and Ponus Ridge Middle Schools. Students from these two middle schools make up the student body at Brien McMahon High School. Brien McMahon High School's total student population as of October 1, 2015 was 1,661. On October 1, 2015, there were 411 freshman, 416 sophomore, 446 junior, and 388 senior students enrolled. The school's average per pupil expenditure has remained relatively stable as it was \$15,639 in 2012-2013 and \$15,509 in 2010-2011. The school's student population as of November 2, 2015 was 27.6% White, 43.7% Hispanic, 21.6% Black, 4.9% Asian American, <1% American Indian, and 1.7% multi-racial. Student enrollment at Brien McMahon High School was 1,626 in 2012-2013, 1,655 in 2013-2014, and 1,689 in 2014-2015. It is staffed by 105.4 full-time equivalent teachers, 6 full-time administrators, and 1 library media specialist.

Additionally, student support professionals include guidance counselors (8), social workers (1.8), psychologist (1), speech therapist (1), and nurses (1.5). There are additional support personnel, which includes a library clerk (1), special education aides (9.8), secretaries (8), clerks (4.3), instructional aides (1.46), School-to-Career liaison (.4), and custodians (15).

Currently, Brien McMahon High School follows a four-day rotation of an eight period schedule. Each period is forty-seven minutes long with four minutes passing time between classes. There are four separate lunch shifts each day aligning with periods 4, 5, 6 & 7. There is a 20 minute advisory period each week.

Brien McMahon High School offers Advanced Placement level work in Art History, Studio Art, Biology, Calculus, Chemistry, Macro-Economics, English Literature and Composition, English language and Composition, European History, American Government and Politics, Comparative Politics, French Language, Latin, Italian, Physics, Psychology, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature, Statistics, and United States History. Cumulative class rank is calculated using all subjects based on a 4-point scale. Honors courses are weighted with .50 additional quality points and Advanced Placement courses are weighted with 1.0 additional quality points.

Brien McMahon partners with the University of Connecticut (UCONN) to provide students with an early college experience, UCONN ECE program, which allows students to matriculate in a college level class while still in high school. Course materials are consistent with those used in the UCONN-based course, and students have full access to the UCONN library. Successful completion of the course provides students with a UCONN transcript and credits, which can be transferred to most higher education institutions toward a degree. There are seven UCONN ECE offerings available during the 2015-2016 school year.

Within Brien McMahon High School is The Center for Global Studies (CGS), an inter-district, international studies magnet school that focuses on Arabic, Chinese and Japanese language, history, and culture. The CGS is committed to preparing students to become citizens of a global society. The 280 students (about half from Norwalk and half from outside Norwalk) benefit from small classes that have fewer than 18 students each. Instruction is student-centered and active. Students study the history of the Middle East, China or Japan for one year to give more understanding of the culture, and they enroll in a World Literature class each year, reading stories, novels, and poetry from around the world. Students take math, science, physical education, music and additional elective courses in Brien McMahon classes.

CGS has a highly diverse student body, coming from a wide spectrum of communities. Students live in the urban centers of Bridgeport, Stamford, and Norwalk, and in the affluent communities of Darien, Fairfield, and Weston. The students represent a range of geographic, economic, racial, and ethnic diversity. The CGS is funded through the Connecticut State Department of Education Bureau of Choice Programs, with support from Norwalk Public Schools.

The graduating Class of 2015 totaled 427 students: 63.4% (271) of graduating seniors enrolled in four-year colleges; 26.2% (112) of graduating seniors enrolled in two-year colleges; 1% (5) of graduating seniors enrolled in the military. Seventy-five percent of the graduating seniors took the SAT. The average SAT scores for students in the Class of 2015 was 484 in Reading, 482 in Math, and 485 in Writing.

Brien McMahon High School offers a comprehensive developmental guidance program in which all students are given access to the *Naviance* career and college informational database which serves as a diagnostic tool for college and career planning. The developmental guidance program of Brien McMahon High School is an individually designed program that provides guidance and counseling services responding to the developmental needs of all students: post-secondary planning; personal, social, and emotional development; as well as career and vocational planning. The program recognizes the unique qualities of each individual student and provides students with opportunities to acquire or improve competencies in the areas of school adjustment and achievement, career planning and exploration, decision making and knowledge of self and others. The Student Success Plans (SSPs) are linked to *Naviance* as well. Additionally, Brien McMahon High School has one part-time School-to-Career counselor which supports the school's wide-ranging School-to-Career program with

annual events such as the Career Expo, Job Shadow, and the Volunteer Expo.

The Senior Internship program started in the spring of 2015. This program takes place during the last month of students' senior year. Students are able to experience life outside of school by participating in a range of business opportunities throughout the community to solidify their interest in a certain field and cultivate the possibilities of other careers.

The guidance and certified support staff have created or partnered with a variety of programs that support at-risk students both academically and socially. The Robert E. Applebee Health Center provides on-site counseling services with a psychiatrist, social worker, and nurse practitioner available to students during school hours. Brien McMahon High School's collaborative programs for at-risk youth also include the Juvenile Review Board (JRB) and a myriad of support groups such as The Bereavement Group, a partnership with the DEN for Grieving Kids based in Darien, CT. In the area of academic development and college planning, Brien McMahon High School offers SAT prep classes, regular college fair and visitation activities, financial aid support and college planning events open to all students and parents. Brien McMahon High School partners with The Gaffney Foundation to assist first-generation college-bound students with additional academic support enabling students to thrive in a competitive college environment. The College Representation Program features 115 colleges with representatives who visit on-site and offer college application support and college recruitment opportunities.

## **Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations**

### **Core Values:**

Brien McMahon High School will prepare all students for the challenges of the 21st century by fostering intellectual curiosity and inspiring our students to become responsible, ethical, and innovative members of a global society.

### **Beliefs about Learning:**

Students learn best when....

- They are active and engaged in their own learning
- Parents/Guardians take an active and supportive role in their child's education on a daily basis
- Teachers promote a high level of intellectual curiosity by presenting students with dynamic, relevant (personalized), rigorous lessons
- There are clear and consistent expectations and rules for all students, faculty, staff and administrators
- There is a safe, supportive, respectful and collaborative environment

### **Learning Expectations:**

BMHS students, as innovative problem solvers, will draw upon prior knowledge to sustain active inquiry, and take educated risks as critical thinkers.

BMHS students, as ethical members of a diverse society, will demonstrate an understanding of civic rights and duties by positively and responsibly contributing to the school and larger community.

BMHS students, as 21st century communicators, will be able to listen, to write, speak and present ideas effectively.

BMHS students, as engaged learners will be responsible for their learning and effectively contribute to the learning environment.

# Introduction

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## Introduction

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is the oldest of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States. Since its inception in 1885, the Association has awarded membership and accreditation to those educational institutions in the six-state New England region who seek voluntary affiliation.

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees which supervises the work of four Commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission on Public Schools which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and the Commission on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS), and the Commission on International Education (CIE).

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and accreditation of public secondary school member institutions, CPSS requires visiting committees to assess the degree to which the evaluated schools meet the qualitative Standards for Accreditation of the Committee. Those Standards are:

### Teaching and Learning Standards

- Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

- Curriculum

- Instruction

- Assessment of and for Student Learning

### Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- School Culture and Leadership

- School Resources for Learning

- Community Resources for Learning

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee's visiting committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Committee in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

## Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Brien McMahon High School, a committee of 5 members (also known as the "School Excellence Committee"), including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included students, parents, central office administrators, and community members.

The self-study of Brien McMahon High School extended over a period of 22 school months from January 2014 to March 2016. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, parents, central office administrators, and community members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Committee, Brien McMahon High School also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

It is important that the reader understand that every subcommittee appointed by the steering committee was required to present its report to the entire professional staff for approval. No single report developed in the self-study became part of the official self-study documents until it had been approved by the entire professional staff.

### **The Process Used by the Visiting Committee**

A visiting committee of 16 evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Brien McMahon High School. The Committee members spent four days in Norwalk, Connecticut, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools, school administrators, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Brien McMahon High School.

The visiting committee built its professional judgment on evidence collected from the following sources:

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 45 hours shadowing 15 students for a half day
- a total of 22 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion in the report was agreed to by visiting committee consensus. Sources of evidence for each conclusion drawn by the visiting committee appear in the Standards sections of the report, below each Indicator. The seven Standards for Accreditation reports include commendations and recommendations that in the visiting committee's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Committee Standards.

This report of the findings of the visiting committee will be forwarded to the Committee on Public Secondary Schools which will make a decision on the accreditation of Brien McMahon High School.

# Standard 1 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The Brien McMahon High School community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to the core values and beliefs about learning. The school excellence committee led the process using resources such as Richard DuFour's *Learning by Doing: a Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* and Charles Fadel and Bernie Trilling's *21st Century Skills* in order to galvanize the school's commitment to its core values and to ensure that their practices were grounded in research. The core values were developed beginning in fall of 2011, and the process involved stakeholders from every part of the Brien McMahon High School community. The school governance council facilitated discussion among students, faculty members, administrators, parents, and community members. In the summer of 2012, the school excellence committee completed the third and final draft of the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. In this document, the core values and beliefs about learning are clearly articulated. The document was then shared with all stakeholders. While some of the teachers are able to articulate the values and beliefs with fidelity, others are unable. The Endicott survey shows 85.9 percent of students feel that they are familiar with the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, and 83.5 percent of parents feel that they are familiar with the core values and beliefs; however, only 70.3 percent feel they are familiar with the 21st century learning expectations. Parents are able, in general terms, to articulate the impact of the school's core values, and they believe that their children are being well-prepared for colleges and careers. The Brien McMahon High School Statement of Core Values is published and posted throughout the building. When all constituents are engaged in creating and becoming conversant with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, all members of the school community will share ownership and the responsibility of promoting and ensuring that these values are embedded in the school culture.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- parents
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 1 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The school has measurable expectations for all students in the academic, social, and civic competencies and has school-wide rubrics to assess student performance in communication, personal development, problem solving, and civic competencies. The rubrics are based on the core values, having been developed from contributions from students, parents, faculty, and community members. The rubrics list the expected performances in ranges of "basic, developed, goal, and exemplary" and are clearly divided to assess a range of criteria to meet each of the 21st century learning expectations. All rubrics have space for student self-assessment as well as for teacher feedback. In 2013-2014, teachers representing a cross section of the disciplines piloted rubrics in their classrooms. In 2014-2015, teachers tied one school-wide rubric to their student learning objectives (SLOs), as part of their teacher evaluation. In the last few years, the culture at the school has shifted to a greater emphasis on a student-centered learning approach, and the faculty sees the value of using these rubrics in assessing these learning experiences. To assess the core values and beliefs about learning, the school developed 21st century school-wide rubrics. In committees, teachers created communication, problem solving, personal responsibility, and civic responsibility rubrics; however, upon viewing student work, it is evident that most departments are implementing only the communication rubric. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of emerging use of the problem-solving rubric. Moreover, evidence shows that departments/teachers have created their own rubrics and, at times, include parts of the school-wide rubrics. Parents stated that their children are very aware of the expectations of teachers and of how they are being assessed. According to the Endicott survey results, 77 percent of parents, 85 percent of staff, and 60 percent of students agree that the school's learning expectations (academics, social, and civic) are challenging. Seventy-five percent of students and 90 percent of the staff say they are familiar with the school-wide rubrics, and 85 percent of the parents understand the level of learning that their children must demonstrate in order to meet the school's learning expectations; however, school personnel are working to analyze the extent to which the school's 21st century learning expectations are challenging. The analytic rubrics are aligned with the core values and beliefs about learning and use consistent language to describe expectations. After some teachers piloted the rubrics, the core values committee and the school's data team reported that the rubrics needed to be edited and recalibrated in an effort to provide a useful vehicle to drive higher order thinking instruction, and the school plans to revise the rubrics accordingly. Consequently, administrators and teachers believe that more time is needed to provide professional development prior to full implementation. Once the school-wide rubrics are further developed, recalibrated, and target high levels of achievement, teachers will have the data necessary to implement and indicate the ability to achieve the core values that they have established.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 1 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, are beginning to drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and are sometimes reflected upon and considered when decisions are made regarding policies, procedures, and resource allocations. There are a variety of programs that promote the school-wide focus on creating a student-centered environment. Students and teachers indicate that the House Advisory program connects each student with an adult mentor and a peer network group for four years. Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) is implemented to help students understand their civic responsibility as a BMHS "Senator." Peer mediation provides the students with conflict resolution and problem-solving skills that can transfer to all aspects of their lives. A student indicated that the summer academy to transition freshmen was the "best preparation for high school." In addition to these structured programs, the student-centered focus is seen in adult practices in the school. This was clearly evident when a student asked her ELA teacher if she could send the teacher her history paper for feedback before she submitted it to her social studies teacher, and the ELA teacher agreed to assist. The ELA teacher explained that this was not a collaborative assignment, but that it is a common practice among ELA teachers. The Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC), athletic team altruistic projects, Best Buddies, and the "Be Mo Positive" displays serve as examples of the safe, supportive, respectful, and collaborative environment that the school strives to achieve. The core values, beliefs and 21st century expectations influence decisions about policies, procedures and resources. Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) was implemented to ensure the academic growth of English language learners. In many content areas, traditional summative assessments are continually enhanced or sometimes replaced by roundtable and other performance-based assessments. New courses and interdisciplinary courses are developed to address 21st century learning. The courses include a Creative Writing course on creating graphic novels, digital arts, and a freshman seminar. A number of available Chromebooks and the school's Bring Your Own Device policy are in place to actively engage students in their learning. Also, the special education 18-21 year old program previously provided only in-house programming, but next year will include out-placement life experiences. The core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are clearly evident in the culture of the school. While, at times, they have a minimal connection to student learning in the classroom, the Endicott survey indicates that 87.5 percent of the students are familiar with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The school provides a "BMHS Compact," which represents these values and is a behavioral contract drawn from the learning expectations. The survey also indicates that 80.6 percent of teachers consider the core values and beliefs about learning when making important teaching decisions. While they are evident in the instructional strategies in some classrooms, they do not drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom. At least one school-wide rubric is being used by teachers, but they do not target high levels of achievement in some subjects. Fifty percent of the mid- and end-of- year summative assessments do not reflect summative knowledge; instead, these assessments only evaluate communication skills. Teachers indicate a need for more time to research, receive comprehensive professional development, and engage in continuous and cohesive feedback and reflection. When the school develops and integrates its school-wide analytic rubrics specifically related to their 21st century learning expectations, it will provide the foundation to drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom; additionally, the development and implementation of protocols will provide the foundations to guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study

- student shadowing
- student work
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 1 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

The Brien McMahon High School community has reviewed its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, but there is no formal process in place and research, data sources, and school and district priorities are not evident. The core values, beliefs, and learning expectations were developed from 2011-2012 with input from multiple stakeholders and in agreement with the district mission and vision statements. In 2014, a review of the document was conducted. Regarding students' belief that the core values statement is representative of current ideology, students state that at the beginning of each school year, they are provided the BMHS Compact document, which is to be signed by a parent, teacher, and an administrator. The Compact, which is based on the core values, beliefs, and expectations, is a student agreement to take responsibility for one's behavior and learning. The Endicott survey indicates that 85.9 percent of the students are familiar with the expectations; however, the students candidly state that they just sign off on the sheet. The same questions were asked of the school governance council, which consists of faculty, student, community, and parent representatives. With an increased emphasis on preparing students for a 21st century world, the statement was amended to include and emphasize the word "global." In discussion with teachers, parents, and students, it was clear that the climate has improved greatly in the last 10 years. Students feel very comfortable with other students and participate in many different activities. Students find it easy to ask their teachers, counselors, and administrators for help. Parents state that they believe that their children are extremely well-prepared for the world outside the doors of the school. One parent stated that one of her children started at a university this past fall and was more prepared than students who had attended private schools. Limited discussions have taken place during the professional learning community (PLC) time in the core areas, regarding the data from standardized tests. The data team indicates that there is no protocol on how to look at the data. With that in mind, there is no record of changes made or discussion of the expectations based upon the review of data sources. In addition, there is no structured examination about students' achievement of school-wide learning expectations. Some teachers believe there is a plan to review the core values and beliefs about learning; however, housemasters know of no regular review and revision process set up for the future. While the school community is in agreement with the learning expectations, revisions of the school-wide analytic rubrics are being conducted by school administration and the school excellence committee. A process is underway to determine the best manner to implement the use of school-wide rubrics to assess 21st century learning expectations. The data team reports that the rubrics have impacted instructional practices, but have not resulted in changes to curricula. The implementation of a process of regular and transparent review will be essential for the school to incorporate the adopted core values and beliefs and to meet the 21st century learning needs of the students. When a well-defined process for regular review and revision is articulated and executed using research, data sources and school and district priorities, the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations will continue to serve as explicit foundational commitments to students and the community.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 1 Commendations

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## Commendation

The clearly expressed core values, beliefs, and learning expectations that were developed by a group representative of all stakeholders

## Commendation

The development of analytic school-wide rubrics for learning expectations that can be used with all students

## Commendation

The school's culture that supports the affective needs of, develops strong connections with, and affords extra help to all students

## Commendation

The collaborative efforts and strong dedication of teachers to helping all students

# Standard 1 Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Create a schedule and process for stakeholders to review the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations and school-wide rubrics informed by current research, multiple data sources, as well as school and district priorities

## Recommendation

Provide additional professional development to support the 21st century learning expectations

## Recommendation

Develop and implement a process to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom

## Recommendation

Articulate and implement a long-range plan for collecting and reviewing performance data from the school-wide rubrics so it can be used to guide the school's policies, procedures, decision making, and resource allocations

## Recommendation

Ensure that the school-wide analytic rubrics are used to measure the school's 21st century learning expectations

# Standard 2 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

Currently, the curriculum is not purposely designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Those curriculum documents which have been revised identify the 21st century skills that will be addressed, but there is little evidence of evaluation based on the available student work. The unrevised curricula do not identify 21st century skills; for example, the geometry curriculum, which was last revised in 2013, emphasizes skills and ways to achieve these skills, but it does not include 21st century learning expectations, and the AP Physics curriculum, which was last revised in 2006, includes major content areas and topics with student objectives without reference to 21st century learning expectations. As the 21st century learning expectations were formally adopted in 2014, the school is only beginning to specifically incorporate the 21st century learning expectations into the curriculum. While a large majority of the classes are described as student-centered, students do not have opportunities to practice and achieve each of the school's 21st learning expectations in every class. In some disciplines, there is a lack of updated curricula that explicitly states that students will practice or achieve 21st century learning expectations. Nevertheless, the school continues to finalize its plan for formal rubric implementation that assesses each of the school's 21st century learning expectations, and teachers currently use rubrics in their classrooms. As the formal rubric implementation plan progresses, some teachers are integrating several of the 21st century learning expectations into departmental or assignment-based rubrics. These learning expectations include problem solving, communication, civic responsibility, and personal development. A rubric used to assess a research paper in World History, which includes criteria from a departmental rubric such as depth of information and clarity, also includes a critical thinking component consistent with 21st century learning expectations. When all curriculum incorporates the school's 21st century learning expectations, then it will ensure that all students will have opportunities to achieve and practice these learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- central office personnel
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

Some curriculum is written in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, content and skills as well as 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies and assessment practices. The English language arts, social studies, and world languages curricula, rewritten in 2014, are in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, skills, the school's 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. However, the majority of other curricula are not currently written in a common format that addresses the school's 21st century learning expectations and assessment practices, and the unrevised curricula are not anchored to the school-wide or course-specific rubrics. As of 2013, the math department began using the Connecticut state curriculum for several of their math courses, and they are currently using PLC time for lesson planning - teachers report that PLC time is not generally used to write curriculum. The majority of departments indicate that there is no formal curriculum revision process or timeline, having not rewritten their curriculum documents in over 10 years. Opportunities to write curriculum are not building-directed and are instead identified by central office administrators who oversee curriculum. Moreover, due to the required alignment with the Norwalk Public School's other high school, curriculum coordination and revision work are difficult to accomplish at the school level. Some departments use PLC time to review student work and share instructional practices. Some teachers also share materials on Google Drive, which allows for better horizontal alignment within the school. Assessment practices are identified within the curricula that have been recently revised; however, there are no references to school-wide or course-specific rubrics therein. Teachers are using sections of the school-wide rubrics periodically throughout the year, but not consistently, as found in student work. Teachers indicate that the 21st century rubrics are often used informally, and this is evident in the low number of assignments containing rubrics connected to the 21st century skills. When all departments modify their respective curricula on the common template, align their curricula with the adopted state standards, and incorporate the school's newly adopted 21st century learning expectations, the school will be able to successfully align the curriculum with the 21st century learning expectations and develop common rubrics for measuring expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders

# Standard 2 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The curriculum periodically emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and informed and ethical use of technology. The curriculum includes limited cross-disciplinary learning opportunities for students. Higher order thinking and problem solving are demonstrated in many courses across departments, including U.S. History and English. In U.S. History, the class took part in an inquiry lesson that included primary sources, which were used by students to take a position on who was ultimately to blame for the outbreak of the Cold War - the U.S. or the Soviet Union. In addition, English I fiction and nonfiction texts are used during student-led discussions requiring students to identify content to compare, contrast, and analyze literary devices and themes; for example, in a student-centered English I class, students used critical thinking skills to identify and explain whether five characters in *The Lord of the Flies* were civilized or savage. Many courses are offered at both the honors and Advanced Placement (AP) level; twenty AP courses are presently offered. In addition, the school offers college credit courses, including seven Early College Experience (ECE) courses through the University of Connecticut and four Project Lead the Way courses through the University of New Haven.

There is no formal mechanism for incorporating cross-disciplinary learning experiences. As a result, cross-disciplinary learning opportunities for students are limited and are often initiated by individual teachers on their own time (e.g., members of the art department developed an interdisciplinary project that requires students to design and present a multimedia project on an environmental pollutant.) According to the Endicott survey, 63 percent of teachers agree that there are cross-disciplinary learning experiences. While PLC sessions allow teachers time to informally discuss curriculum, teachers indicate that this work rarely involves discussions about cross-disciplinary opportunities, and they do not have adequate time to meet with colleagues for the development of this type of student work. Authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school are abundantly evident. These opportunities include a community senior internship program for professional work experiences outside of the building during school hours; a competition that replicates the television show "Shark Tank" that requires groups of students to present an idea that may improve the school with volunteer judges from the PTO, local business owners, the mayor's office, and the Norwalk Education Fund; and students enrolled in the child development classes who create and implement lesson plans for preschool programs. Currently, 55 percent of students believe that the school provides them with authentic out-of-school experiences.

Informed and ethical use of technology is expected of all students at BMHS. The Endicott survey indicates that 83 percent of students believe that they learn how to use technology ethically, and 73 percent of staff believes the curriculum emphasizes ethical use of technology. For the U.S. History research paper assessment rubric, students are expected to perform a clear and in-depth analysis of collected information, most of which comes from electronic sources and databases. Entering freshmen are introduced to and sign a district-wide agreement noting their commitment to this standard. The periodic use of technology also includes the use of a number of carts each holding 26-28 Chromebooks that are shared for classroom use; the exchange of work; information and conversation between students and teachers via Google Drive; and the development of students' personal success plans, which are developed and tracked through Naviance. When students in all classes have consistent opportunities to practice higher order thinking and problem-solving skills, and when cross-disciplinary learning is incorporated as a consistent educational practice, then all students will have the ability to meet the school's expectations for 21st century learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

There is some alignment between the written and taught curriculum. Current methods of aligning the written and taught curriculum include the school's teacher evaluation process. Some teachers periodically provide weekly lesson plans to administration for review and possible feedback, while other teachers indicate that they have not provided lesson plans, data, and instructional strategies to administration for review and feedback. Although all departments cited the importance of periodic professional learning communities, not all teachers are formally scheduled for PLC time. Regarding those who are scheduled for PLC, they are arranged by the courses that they teach and have the opportunity to meet to discuss various aspects of teaching and learning including curriculum, lesson plans, common assessments, data, and instructional strategies. Teachers within departments are often teaching the same curriculum; consequently, the planned curriculum is horizontally aligned across some disciplines. All English I teachers are using "fishbowl discussions," which require 21st century skills such as critical thinking and communication, to assess students' understanding of, for instance, *Romeo and Juliet*. In addition, 78.7 percent of the staff is in agreement that the written and taught curriculum are aligned. While there are instances of alignment between written and taught curriculum, there is no formal process in place to ensure this is taking place across all classrooms and disciplines. While the school is presently making some progress with the district's plan for curriculum review and revisions, it is unclear when this will be implemented in such departments as business, art, and special education. When there is a clearly defined, formalized process in place with written curriculum school-wide, there will be measurable ways to determine and ensure that all teachers adhere to the written curriculum consistently across departments.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

Curricular coordination and vertical articulation does not exist between and among all academic areas within the school or with sending schools in the district. Several department leaders indicate that efforts have been made within their departments to increase alignment; however, there has been little communication between the high school and sending middle schools. The middle school principals agree that very little vertical alignment is in place, which limits the possibility for vertical articulation of the curriculum. However, this is not the case with the respective schools' guidance departments. The middle school principals indicate that the high school guidance department communicates with the middle school frequently and helps with the transition of middle school students by presenting at the middle schools to discuss course and co-curricular offerings as well as by outlining substantive differences between the middle and high school to better prepare students for their transitions. The strategic operating plan, updated March 30, 2016, indicates that additional math supports and a 90-minute double block will be instituted at the middle schools next year to help remediate math deficiencies, which will help with vertical alignment in math between the middle and high schools. The written curricula are aligned between Norwalk and Brien McMahon High Schools and teacher representatives from both schools were present during the writing process. The school does not have a formal curriculum review cycle, but the faculty utilizes the weekly PLC meetings for collaboration within individual departments, and several teachers have independently made efforts to work collaboratively across the curriculum during preparation periods. Teachers indicate that they are interested in collaborating with other departments and schools; however, they will need additional professional development time to make that possible. The written curriculum is to some extent the taught curriculum. In accordance with Connecticut State Department of Education requirements, the school's administrators are using the Connecticut System for Educator Evaluation and Development (SEED) model to evaluate teachers and their lessons consistently. Teacher observations validate that the teachers are teaching to the curriculum in a number of areas such as math, world languages, English, and social studies; however, such alignment is not yet established within the older unrevised curricula. In addition, several teachers voiced concern regarding the absence of vertical alignment of the newly written curricula as well as the lack of teacher input in modifying new curriculum. When the school formalizes the process for the development and revision of curriculum across content areas and coordinates and aligns curricula with the sending schools, then all students will receive a challenging academic experience that aligns with the district's learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school website

# Standard 2 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

Currently, staffing levels, equipment, facilities, and supplies are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities; however, the funds provided for the library media center are insufficient to fully implement the curriculum. The staffing levels of the school are being met, and 68.5 percent of the professional staff believes that the school has adequate facilities. The school's maximum class size is 28 students and within acceptable limits to the school's stakeholders. According to the Endicott survey, 65.7 percent of the staff agrees that the school has sufficient professional staff to implement the curriculum including the co-curriculum program and other learning opportunities. Many teachers stated that when resources are needed to support their classes, an effort is made by the administrators to meet their needs; however, instructional materials, technology, and the resources of the library media center (LMC) are not sufficient to ensure that the LMC program can fully support the curriculum. The purchase of library media center resources is not always coordinated with teaching needs. Moreover, there appears to be minimal resources available to the library media specialist to meet the needs of teachers and learners. Insufficient funding allocated to the library media center has restricted the availability of resources to meet curricular needs. The funding that the library media specialist is afforded is almost entirely allocated to the online database subscription fees for student research. Moreover, the number of students assigned to study halls in the LMC throughout the school day, coupled with the reduced number of working computers in the LMC's computer lab, results in teachers' inability to effectively use LMC services.

The Endicott survey reveals that 56 percent of teachers indicate that sufficient instructional materials are in place to implement the curriculum; however, several teachers reported that they do not have enough textbooks to support a class of 28 students. One teacher stated that there are 15 books being shared between two health classes. Another teacher stated that, for the 28 students in his science class, he has about 20 books and several of them are falling apart, and he indicated the web-based student support sites are not regularly renewed, leaving students without text resources. Both teachers indicated that the books are very old and the material contained within is very outdated. While teachers on the Curriculum Standard Subcommittee echoed this concern, those who recently had their curricula revised are allocated new and adequate supplies of textbooks. Although the availability and quality of technology has increased over the last few years, teachers indicate that there remains room for improvement. Several teachers reported that access to technology is still a problem; for example, four Chromebook carts are shared among twelve teachers; hence, once the first four carts are signed out, the other teachers are without the resource. Although 82.1 percent of parents believe that their children have been provided with necessary materials for their classes, only 55.2 percent believes that their children have adequate access to technology. Additional, updated instructional resources, ubiquitous availability of technology, and needs-based expansion of library media center resources and usage will support the curriculum and co-curricular activities to help students meet the school's learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 2 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

The district provides the school's professional staff with personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and informal revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research, but on an inconsistent basis. Central office administrators confirmed an inequity in funding for the high school which will be resolved in the 2016-2017 school year with the redistribution of the monies allocated to the schools throughout the district. The current curriculum revision process, which was developed and is managed by central office, is supposed to be on an ongoing ten-year cycle; however, much of the content has not been revised for more than ten years. At this time, the district does not have a formal review cycle, which is attributed to frequent turnover in district leadership. Only two departments were close to their projected revision dates: social studies and world languages. Central office administrators play a major role in initiating curriculum development; there are several curriculum coordinators as well as consultants tasked to develop curriculum. PLC meetings have allowed several departments to collaborate and evaluate instructional strategies. Many teachers have not had an opportunity to engage in a dialogue regarding the newly written curriculum or to give meaningful feedback, which has caused teachers to become very frustrated with the newly revised curriculums. Several teachers expressed the desire to work on curriculum revisions, but have not been invited to initiate revisions. The development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum have been slowed by other factors. In some cases, coordination between the district's high schools by district-employed curriculum leaders has proven to be challenging. Some teachers expressed the desire to edit the curriculum during the summer, while others would rather revise during the school year. Availability of substitutes, adequate time, and pertinent funding also pose a great challenge to the building administrators; hence, some departments would prefer to write/revise curriculum after school for two hours each day, rather than to impact instructional hours. This sentiment is reflected in the Endicott survey: 48 percent of staff agrees that there is sufficient time given to curriculum writing and revision. Teachers report in the self-study that they do not see a link between current research and the development of their curricula. Most teachers feel that time is also an impediment to meaningful discussions of the 21st century learning expectations. When a formal curriculum cycle is implemented and is consistently supported by sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources, it will enable collaborative development and evaluation of the curriculum using assessment results, and the curriculum will fully support teaching, learning, and assessment opportunities needed for students to achieve 21st century learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

# Standard 2 Commendations

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## Commendation

The purposeful design of updated curriculum in some departments, which provides students with extensive opportunities to practice and achieve the school's learning expectations

## Commendation

The emphasis placed on student-centered and authentic learning opportunities both inside and outside the classroom in order to promote civic awareness and the application of students' knowledge

## Commendation

The commitment and willingness of the professional staff to the anticipated curriculum revision process

# Standard 2 Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Clearly define a formalized process for the regular development, review, and revision of the school's curricula and ensure its implementation

## Recommendation

Ensure that all curricula incorporates 21st century learning expectations

## Recommendation

Provide consistent opportunities to practice higher order thinking, problem-solving skills, and cross-disciplinary learning to better prepare students for life and work in the 21st century

## Recommendation

Align all curriculum horizontally as well as vertically

## Recommendation

Dedicate adequate resources to ensure appropriate educational materials, technology, and services in the library media center, so that all students can practice and achieve the school's learning expectations

## Recommendation

Ensure that the district provides the professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research

# Standard 3 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are occasionally examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Teachers, administrators, and school leaders indicate that there is an informal process in which teachers meet to discuss instructional practices. The math, social studies, world languages, English, and science departments have common planning times built into the schedule to address instructional practices, but this is not a formal process. During this time, teachers meet in course-specific groups to discuss student work, plan instruction, adapt curriculum, and compare best practices. These meetings are occasionally used to examine instructional practices and improve upon them. The PLCs are not formally designed to follow a plan from meeting to meeting; rather, they are used to address needs among the teachers in a specific subject area. Based on the Endicott survey, 77 percent of teachers continually examines instructional practices, and 54 percent of parents believe that teachers personalize instruction. Teachers report that the evaluations and observations by administrators can afford timely feedback to teachers based on their instructional practices; however, teachers state that they would benefit from more consistent and timely feedback. The school is committed to student-centered learning, but not all teachers have adapted their lessons accordingly, and not all teachers connect their lessons to the school's 21st century learning expectations. When instructional practices are continually examined to ensure congruency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, students will be able to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations and improve academic performance.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 3 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

While it is clearly evident that teachers personalize instruction, engage students as active and self-directed learners, and apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, they less frequently engage students in cross-disciplinary learning and use reliable technology. In addition, many teachers emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, but these practices are not evident in all classrooms. Many teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Teachers personalize instruction based on learning styles or by giving students choices in their assessments, allowing students to makeup work within a week or a few days or allowing students to work in groups or individually. According to the Endicott survey, 89.8 percent of teachers believe that they personalize instruction, while only 37.5 percent of students indicate the same. Teachers in mathematics, science, English, social studies and world languages meet in course-specific PLCs to discuss student learning needs and instructional practices. Recently, the school has been moving to a more student-centered learning environment. Teachers were given professional development and were sent to a visit the East Side Community High School in New York City to observe certain student-centered learning strategies in action. Students feel comfortable talking with teachers and administrators about instructional issues and feel that their issues will be resolved. Teachers are receptive to student-centered learning.

The school offers a few cross-disciplinary courses such as an art and English, co-taught class in which students come together to work on a graphic novel. In addition, there are sporadic cross-disciplinary projects that have been developed by teachers in different subject areas. A special education and health teacher work together on lessons to incorporate the school's garden. In chemistry, students study the historical impacts that chemicals have had on societal, cultural, and political transformations as part of their "molecules that changed history" project. Occasionally, PLC meetings are blended together so that different subject areas can meet and work on cross-disciplinary projects. Anticipating official acceptance as an International Baccalaureate World School, the IB program would be implemented in the 2017-2018 school year, and this program focuses heavily on connecting the different disciplines.

Based on the student-directed classroom model that the school has implemented over the last few years, more of the work has been student driven. Many teachers are compelling the students to be self-directed learners. An aspect of this model is a "round table" performance task developed by the aforementioned East Side Community High School. The round table causes students to bring together what they have learned throughout the year and to present it to a small group of teachers.

Many classes emphasize inquiry, problem solving and higher order thinking skills. The school offers twenty AP courses and a multitude of honors classes. Students are being challenged in most classes. It is evident that in higher level courses such as AP and honors, higher order thinking is stressed, but, in classes that are not among the most challenging, those inquiry and problem-solving skills are not always emphasized. According to Endicott survey, 92.6 percent of teachers feel they consistently engage students, while 71.9 percent of parents agree.

As previously referenced, in many learning areas, students are tasked with a round table assignment to combine all they have learned throughout the year and present it before a few panel members. Seniors are able to participate in internships outside of school in lieu of class work during the last month of the school year. Teachers across many subject areas assign projects and research papers. Students in English courses create units and lesson plans to teach a lesson to the rest of the class. These students prepare lessons, develop homework, and assess their peers. In English courses, students keep portfolios throughout their four years of high school and evaluate their progress at the end of senior year. Students have been using the school-wide rubrics to self-assess skills such as writing, problem solving, and personal development. The school-wide rubrics are currently

under continued revision, and teachers as well as students are learning how to incorporate the rubrics into everyday learning. Students are given exit slips and other types of activities that allow them to communicate self-reflection on their learning to their teachers. According to the Endicott survey, 64.3 percent of students indicate that teachers provide them with opportunities to assess their own work; for example, as part of the English portfolio, students' reflect on their prior work and assess their own progress.

The use of technology is required for completing assignments, according to 72.9 percent of the students, yet teachers have had mixed results in wielding the school's technology. Many classrooms have SMARTBoards, but only some of the teachers are using their interactive features, as most are using them as projection surfaces. SMARTBoards have been in place in classrooms for the last few years, but recently have been breaking down or ceasing to function, while the respective service licensing is expiring. The school is currently deciding on the future of their SMARTBoards and whether or not they will have funding to ensure performance of these devices and improve the instructional integration of the same. Teachers have access to Chromebooks and have been using them in their classes for research and Google Classrooms; however, when a Chromebook breaks down, it is neither fixed nor replaced. Students have issues with the lack of technology availability in the library media center. Web-based textbooks are featured in some courses, but student use of them lacks efficacy and is seen by many students as a waste of money. Although there have been significant improvements, students and staff express concerns with inconsistent Wi-Fi access. When all students are afforded more consistent opportunities to engage in higher order thinking, opportunities to use technology, and cross-disciplinary learning, they will have greater opportunities to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

## **Sources of Evidence**

- classroom observations
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- student work
- teacher interview
- students
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 3 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

Some teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessment, purposefully organizing group learning activities, and providing additional support and alternating strategies within the regular classroom. Many teachers use methods of formative assessments throughout their instruction that influence instructional decisions (e.g., exit and entrance slips, thumbs up/down activities, whiteboards, clickers, cold calling on students, portfolios in English, teacher observations, and teachers' monitoring of student group work). Some classes in English and social studies use Google Classroom and are able to consistently assess students work as it is underway. Teachers indicate they engage in PLC meetings multiple times per week, but there is not a formal process for utilizing data - formative or summative - to provide feedback to students for improvement or to inform future instruction. There is neither a formal process in place for using formative assessment data, nor a process for collecting and analyzing formative assessment data during the PLC meetings.

Many teachers adjust their lessons and teaching strategies based on the specific students in their classrooms. Since implementing a student-based learning system a few years ago, teachers are more adept at knowing how to adjust their teaching strategies to fit the needs of a variety of learners. During the PLC meetings, teachers discuss what strategies are working in their sections and use the best practices to improve learning in their individual classrooms. According to the Endicott survey, 90.7 percent of teachers feel they adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student through strategic differentiation, and 65 percent of students taking the survey agree that teachers use a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students. Students feel that teachers are very receptive to their needs and are willing to adjust instruction when needed.

There are efforts in some departments to align common instructional strategies and assessments in order to analyze student achievement. Since the school has transformed into a student-centered learning environment, the teachers have been extremely receptive to group work and students working collaboratively to improve learning. The principal assisted teachers in this endeavor by providing multiple opportunities for professional development before the new system was implemented. According to the Endicott survey, 90.7 percent of teachers adjust instructional practices by organizing group learning activities, and 83.8 percent of students agree that this practice occurs.

Many teachers offer students a few days or even weeks to retake a test or quiz. Students resoundingly say that the teachers are extremely helpful and are very willing to help out whether it be during their lunch period or after school. Almost all teachers are willing to give up their lunches, mornings or after school time to help struggling students. Math teachers have volunteered to tutor students during the summer for the last few years. In Algebra 1 courses, the Agile Minds mathematics program has been used to supplement the curriculum and to provide additional support to struggling students. Most teachers are receptive to issues students might have with instructional challenges or problems in class. Students indicate that teachers are willing to change to adapt to the needs of the students, while 74.9 percent of parents feel that teachers provide additional support to their children when needed. When teachers consistently use formative assessment to adjust instructional practices, individual student learning needs will be met, thus enabling them to fulfill the academic expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- student work
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 3 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

Many teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by reviewing formative and summative assessments, examining student work, using feedback, engaging in professional discourse, and examining some current research. Teachers use the allotted time in PLC meetings to discuss student work, analyze achievement data and adjust instruction accordingly. The school-wide leadership team looks at data from standardized assessments, such as CAPT, PSAT, SAT, and AP scores to adjust instruction and course offerings. Teachers also use data from entrance/exit slips, clickers, phone activities, and discussion questions. The Endicott survey indicates that 88.9 percent of the teachers improve instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. The departments that work in PLCs occasionally create common assessments to ensure all students taking a particular course are being assessed on the same standards.

According to the Endicott survey, 73.1 percent of teachers believe they have formal opportunities to examine student work to improve their instructional practices. During the PLC meetings, English, math, science, social studies, and world languages analyze student work on a regular basis. Although the PLCs do not have a formal structure, teachers have said that they appreciate the freedom they receive from the school's administrators to do what is in the best interests of students; for example, chemistry has given a quarterly data assessment and has used that data to compare trends from the past four years.

There are numerous ways teachers receive feedback about their instruction, ranging from student feedback and parental input to administrative evaluations. Teachers meet in PLCs to not only discuss student work, but to also collaborate on strategies used in each of their classrooms. During this time, teachers work together and discuss elements that may or may not be working and to share ideas with the group. Teachers proudly relay experiences that they have with current and former students, who return to the school to tell teachers how they appreciated their teaching style or the methods they used in class to motivate them. Teachers also speak highly of parents' involvement. Many parents email teachers about specific issues in the classroom and teachers are receptive to their issues. Teachers mentioned that there was a yearly parental survey in the past, and they are not sure if it still exists, but the school had benefited from the results. The teachers would like to have it implemented again. In addition, students who may have an issue with a certain teacher's teaching style or methods might request that their school counselor remove them; however, instead of taking the student out of the section, the counselors build open communication between the student and the teacher. According to staff and students, sometimes all that is needed is just an open line of communication between the teacher and student. Teachers were somewhat critical of the teacher evaluation process and the timeliness of feedback received after observations or "pop-ins." Teachers welcome feedback and would like to hear about what they can improve upon from administrators. Teachers used the Endicott survey as feedback from students, finding that 43.5 percent of students say they believe that their teachers ask for their ideas/opinions to improve how they teach. An additional method of feedback that most new teachers receive is from Teacher Education and Mentoring program (TEAM) mentors.

The library media center has a small section for teacher development and instructional techniques; however, few teachers access these resources. Every new teacher receives a copy of Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion* as an element of their orientation. Teachers have time to review current research and best practices during their allotted PLC time, but this is not a formalized time dedicated to only reviewing research.

Teachers in social studies, mathematics, science, English, and world languages all have time to discuss best practices during their PLC meetings. Since the school shifted to a student-centered learning model, the majority of professional development has been devoted to this and has allowed teachers to collaborate on adjusting strategies toward this new model. During these professional development opportunities, colleagues are able to

compare and contrast differing instructional strategies to see what fits best into their planning. Teachers collaborated with colleagues from East Side Community High School in New York City to observe how round table discussions are used there as final exams. According to the Endicott survey, 77.8 percent of staff believes that they improve their instructional practices by engaging in formal opportunities for professional discourse. An articulated and more formalized plan to review and use student achievement data and feedback on instructional practices for all stakeholders will ensure student engagement and achievement of the expectations for learning.

## **Sources of Evidence**

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 3 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

Most of the teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. According to the Endicott survey, 90.7 percent of teachers maintain expertise in respective content areas and content-specific instructional practices, and 65 percent of teachers complete graduate level courses beyond their required master's degree to stay up to date in their content area. Parents concur, as 63.8 percent believes that teachers maintained expertise in their subject area, while 79.6 percent of the students believe their teachers are knowledgeable about subjects they teach. Teachers in mathematics, science, social studies, world languages, and English regularly meet in PLCs to discuss both content and delivery of instruction with colleagues. Teachers indicate that they benefit greatly from this feedback from colleagues as well as feedback from students, parents, and administrators. Both teachers and administrators indicate that there will be additional needs for ongoing professional development in student-centered instruction as well as targeted professional learning to plan instruction for the 90-minute block period schedule anticipated for the 2016-2017 school year. When a comprehensive, prioritized plan for the use of professional development time is created and implemented, students will have greater opportunities to benefit from increased teacher expertise that is reflected in instructional practice.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

# Standard 3 Commendations

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## Commendation

The PLCs that meet multiple days a week in English, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages

## Commendation

The analysis of school-wide data such as SAT and AP results to adjust instruction

## Commendation

The parental involvement that helps to inform instruction

## Commendation

The adoption of a student-centered learning model

## Commendation

The flexibility of the teachers to adjust their instruction to the needs of students

## Commendation

The higher order thinking skills, inquiry, and problem-solving skills that are prominent in AP, ECE, and honors courses

# Standard 3 Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Provide teachers with timely feedback from administrators after observations or "pop-ins" to help improve instructional practices

## Recommendation

Provide more time for teachers to discuss research-based strategies to improve instruction

## Recommendation

Align the school's 21st century learning expectations with the student-centered learning model

## Recommendation

Provide professional development for teachers in student-centered learning and instruction in the block schedule

## Recommendation

Increase the level of inquiry, problem-solving skills, and higher order thinking across all classes and levels

## Recommendation

Ensure that adequate and appropriate technology is available to teachers to integrate technology into instructional practices

# Standard 4 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The professional staff does not currently employ a formal process, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. Although school-wide rubrics were revised in June 2013, teachers and administrators state that the school-wide rubrics are neither teacher nor student friendly. In contrast, the self-study states that school-wide rubrics are used with validity in all disciplines; additionally, the Endicott survey states that 67 percent of the staff uses school-wide rubrics. There is confusion among stakeholders on the application of the school-wide rubrics, as their use was not declared in teacher observations, student interviews or teacher interviews. Teachers highlighted the need for school-wide rubrics to fit all assignments, and they believe that the current school-wide rubrics could be improved. Sample student work also reflects minimal use of school-wide analytic rubrics with neither feedback for improvement nor criteria for the school's beliefs about learning. Students express a lack of clarity about the connection between the school-wide rubrics and assessment for learning. Leadership team members conclude that the current school-wide rubrics need to be revised. Many teachers stopped using the rubrics; others use a single line from a school-wide rubric to assess student progress, but there is no process for reporting this data to staff, students or parents. The Assessment of and for Student Learning Standard Subcommittee cited numerous examples of the use of school-wide rubrics for problem solving and critical thinking in art, biology, math, special education, English, and chemistry. Although some teachers have shown that the school-wide rubrics are being used, there is no data collected or analyzed to assess progress. The school's administrators report and the self-study indicates that there is a process in place, but there is confusion for the timeline for this process. The school-wide rubrics will be implemented during fall semester with freshmen, and the freshman house committee will revise school-wide rubrics in the summer of 2016. Students and teachers will evaluate the school-wide rubrics with feedback, and data will be shared with the faculty, revised again, and implemented school-wide. When the professional staff employs the school-wide rubrics for all students, there will be a direct connection between assessment, core values, and 21st century learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The professional staff does not communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families. Teachers consistently communicate student classwork and progress in each course through PowerSchool, the student information system that the professional staff uses to report all grades and progress to students and parents. The Endicott survey shows that 62.6 percent of parents agree that teachers communicate student progress of the 21st century learning expectations, but there is no formal process to share this information. Data has been collected by teachers who have referenced the school-wide rubrics to measure teacher success in achieving student learning outcomes (SLOs) as part of their annual professional evaluation plan, but the data is not communicated to students and parents. The self-study states that the school's professional staff does not communicate the school's progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to the school community. The staff indicates that plans for the future may include using PowerSchool, report cards or Naviance to report progress to students, families, and the community. Once the professional staff begins using the newly revised school-wide rubrics and develops a means of reporting individual and school-wide progress, the school will be able to communicate 21st century learning expectations to all stakeholders.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

Some individual staff members collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. The self-study states that the staff frequently collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Common planning time is used to develop instructional assessment results as well as to collaborate in order to ensure that students are meeting the required goals established by grade level and state standards. While, according to the Endicott survey, 64.8 percent of the teachers believe that data responds to inequities in student achievement, there are no artifacts, reports or student work samples to support that data is analyzed by teachers on an ongoing, collective basis. While the biology PLC shared data about progress in lab reports and problem solving, there is no analysis documented. The English department shared benchmarks using passages from the FAST-R formative assessment tool, which appeal to SAT redesign; however, there is neither data accompanying these benchmarks nor documentation of adjustments made based on data. Teachers and school leaders indicate that use of PLCs on a weekly basis allows teachers to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to improve curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student achievement; however, a process is not in place for reporting data as a means to address student achievement inequities. Once a formal plan is created and implemented for the collection, disaggregation, and analysis of data, the professional staff will be able to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement and ensure that all students can achieve the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

Teachers intermittently communicate to the students unit-specific learning goals that will be assessed prior to a unit, which sometimes reflect the school's 21st century learning expectations. Within the house advisory program, teachers communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed. During the initial meeting of the house advisory program at the beginning of the school year, students are presented with the school-wide rubrics, which outline the 21st century learning expectations; however, there is no formal process for assessing or reporting data on 21st century learning goals to determine whether or not students are meeting these goals. Only 56.4 percent of teachers agree that they communicate the school's learning expectations and corresponding rubrics to be used prior to a unit of study. While 65.2 percent of students agree that teachers communicate unit-specific learning goals, students report that there is rarely any reference to overall objectives until the summative assessment. Some student work highlights unit-specific learning goals. Some teachers supply a rubric as a guide for unit expectations/objectives, but these rubrics are not necessarily provided at the beginning of a unit or when the assessment is assigned. Although the 21st century learning expectations have been developed, they are not fully implemented. Once the school-wide rubrics are redesigned, implemented, and aligned to 21st century learning expectations, students will be able to see a direct correlation between the core values and the 21st century learning expectations and coursework, and teachers will be able to communicate the expectations and goals to students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, some teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics. The self-study indicates that the school is in the process of having teachers provide a rubric to students prior to the student taking summative assessments. This finding is reinforced with various assessment samples including both group and individual projects, lab reports, creative assignments, response papers, and essays. Some teachers provide a checklist, which highlights expectations on an assignment, and these teachers later provide a more specific rubric for scoring. Student work samples reveal that some teachers provide corresponding rubrics ahead of time or a checklist that corresponds to the rubric's expectations; for example, an art teacher provided a creative photography rubric to correlate with a pinhole photograph project; an English teacher used a rubric for a creative monologue assessment; and a social studies teacher issued a rubric for document-based question (DBQ) content. These rubrics are neither common to the department nor are they school-wide. Furthermore, while some teacher rubrics indicate point values for specific areas, the expectations and criteria for scores within target areas are only sometimes indicated, following a checklist format. The Endicott survey's responses show that 74.6 percent of students state that they understand, in advance, the work necessary to meet expectations, and the same percentage of students believe that teachers use rubrics; however, a significant remainder of the student population is less clear on these practices. When all teachers provide and instruct students in the use of course-specific and unit-specific rubrics prior to summative assessments, students will have a better understanding of how to achieve the school's expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

In each unit of study, most teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. According to the Endicott survey results, 85.2 percent of the professional staff agrees that they formally meet to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies. Student and teachers indicate a frequent use of formative assessments, which include warm-up questions, round table discussions, benchmark assessments, exit tickets, thumbs up/down, peer editing, the use of clickers, and peer-to-peer instruction. For instance, a math teacher groups students to review and peer instruct for a quiz, and a Spanish teacher has students participating in skit role-playing and conversational dialogue. Summative assessments include projects, unit tests, essays, and performance tasks. When there is a school-wide, consistent use of a variety of assessment strategies in each unity of study, including formative and summative assessment, all students will be able to understand and achieve the school's learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

Some teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of common, formative and summative assessments. PLCs are the only formal means of collaboration for approximately 74 out of 132 professional staff members. Some staff members meet during a preparation period, lunch time or outside of school hours in order to collaborate. The Endicott survey indicates that 85.2 percent of the teachers collaborates regularly, and this percentage is supported by reports from teachers and administrators. Meeting formally for at least 45 minutes per week, PLCs are used for creation and revision of assessments as well as implementation of rubrics and benchmarks. Teachers indicated that implementation of Common Core Standards has been the focus of the PLCs in English and math in order to create consistency in course units and student-centered learning. The English department reports the inability to teach the same titles at the same time due to limited number of books, thereby inhibiting simultaneous common assessments. Although the English department uses the same benchmarks to assess student progress and skill base, teachers do not use common rubrics or assessments throughout various sections of the same course. Leadership team members cited many common assessments that are used within the math and social studies departments. In other departments, portions of exams or entire final exams are common. Common exams are neither an expectation nor a norm throughout the school at this time. As the teachers continue to collaborate in PLCs, the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments, for all courses will positively impact the students' ability to meet the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 8

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## Conclusions

Some teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure that students revise and improve their work. The Endicott survey indicates that 55 percent of students feel teachers assess/correct school work in a reasonable amount of time, and 58 percent of parents indicate teachers provide feedback in a timely manner. Meetings with parents and students confirm that teachers input grades in PowerSchool in a timely manner, providing parents and students with ongoing, up-to-date access to grades. Some students indicated that assessment feedback is provided in a timely manner; for example, in AP Statistics, assessments are corrected and handed back the next day for students to review, and, after reteaching, they can be resubmitted. Student work samples reveal practices that include both verbal and written feedback, student-centered corrective feedback in group round tables, and rubrics used to score final assignments and/or projects. Many teachers use homework and do-now assignments as formative assessments to provide immediate and corrective feedback. Social studies, English, and math teachers also provide students with the opportunity to revise, rework, edit, and reteach each other, allowing an open forum for questions with teachers and peers. Timely and specific corrective feedback as a common, school-wide practice ensures that students revise and improve their work, which improves learning opportunities for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- students
- Endicott survey

# Standard 4 Indicator 9

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## Conclusions

Many teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. The self-study lists numerous formative assessments used to drive instruction and assessment, including discussions, do-now assignments, exit slips, technology feedback through clickers, Mobi tablets, and web-based assessments. Formative assessments observed in classrooms included check-ins during group work, reworking of assignments, do-now review, and class discussion. Teachers who are scheduled for PLCs in common areas frequently meet to discuss formative assessments, which may result in adjustments to instructional strategies. A majority of teachers continue to use formative assessments within classes to inform and adapt instruction to positively impact student learning. Many teachers demonstrate understanding of formative assessment from not only faculty training, but also with their use of formative assessment to improve student performance on summative assessments. When all teachers use formative assessment to inform and adapt instruction, all students will be able to understand and achieve the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- students

# Standard 4 Indicator 10

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## Conclusions

Many teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. According to the Endicott survey, 72 percent of teachers and administrators examine a range of evidence of student learning during weekly PLCs. World languages teachers are using an outside consultant to analyze student testing performance to revise curriculum. The math and science departments' common summative assessments are reviewed and revised based on benchmarks to improve instruction and learning; however, analysis of school-wide rubrics to achieve the school's learning expectations has stopped, as indicated by students, observed in classrooms and student work. Members of the leadership team concluded that the current school-wide rubrics need to be redesigned. Additionally, teachers highlighted the need to improve standardized curricula with the support of central office administrators. According to the self-study, standardized tests, including AP, SAT, and Project Lead the Way assessments, are reviewed by the school's data team to measure success; however, the sharing of this data with the appropriate PLC or the leadership team has not occurred in a formal and ongoing manner. Moreover, as indicated in the self-study, teachers and administrators do not have access to information from sending schools, post-secondary schools or survey feedback from current students or alumni. When teachers and administrators are able to increase collaborative opportunities for purposes of examining a range of student learning, curriculum can be revised, and instructional practices will improve.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Indicator 11

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## Conclusions

Grading and reporting practices are not regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs. The self-study indicates that common formative and summative assessments and common grading procedures are used within departments and subject areas; however, the self-study also states that grading may vary among teachers. Nevertheless, the school is in the process of developing a system of reporting the results of student progress on school-wide rubrics as part of a new plan. There are some departments that review and revise grading practices at the lesson and assignment level, but there is no departmental or school-wide alignment with the school's core values and beliefs. The science department uses state grade-level expectations to ensure continuity of grading, and the English department uses PLC time to develop, review, and analyze data from common formative assessments. Many teachers use PLC time to review and revise lessons, units, and instruction, but there is no explicit expectation or assurance that PLCs address grading and reporting practices. When grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with a school's core values and beliefs about learning, the school will be able to examine student and school-wide progress toward achieving the expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 4 Commendations

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## Commendation

The teachers' use of myriad formative and summative assessments

## Commendation

The strong collegiality in PLCs that allows regular and frequent collaboration time within departments to continually examine instructional practices

## Commendation

The extensive use of PowerSchool and feedback to support ongoing learning

# Standard 4 Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Create and implement a formal process for assessing individual student progress and whole-school progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

## Recommendation

Develop a formal process for communicating student achievement of the school's social, civic, and academic expectations to students and parents and whole-school progress to the school community

## Recommendation

Create and implement a school-wide plan to collect, disaggregate, and analyze student data to identify and address inequities in student achievement in academic and elective courses and students' progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

## Recommendation

Create and implement a plan to regularly review and revise grading and reporting practices to ensure alignment with the school's core value and beliefs

# Standard 5 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The school community has consciously and continuously built a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for most students. Parents report both pride and trust in the work of the faculty and administration. The principal has established an Hispanic parents group through which she solicits feedback and communicates to Spanish speaking parents. There is also a strong alumni connection. Teachers report feeling supported within their own departments by department chairs due to the creation of PLCs. They also report feeling supported by the administration, specifically the principal, because of her positive feedback, supportive nature, and commitment to student and faculty well-being. There is evidence of strong school pride and shared ownership through the school's theme, "Once a Senator, Always a Senator." An additional example of respectful and supportive culture is evident through the self-study process, where the steering committee, referred to as the school excellence committee, has continuously striven for excellence and improvement. A student stated: "A regular day is a good day at Brien McMahon." In the fall of 2015, students took part in a school climate day, when they participated in group activities that fell under the categories of sports, the arts, games, relaxation or curiosity. The purpose of this event was to work toward a positive school culture. There is some discrepancy, however, between all of these findings and that of the Endicott survey data: While most students, 75.3 percent, reports feeling safe at school, only 39 percent reports that students respect teachers and one another. A little less than 68 percent of students report being proud of the school, while 57.8 percent reports that they feel their teachers are concerned about their learning. The staff results are similar to student results with respect to feeling the school has a safe, positive, and supportive culture with 89.8 percent in agreement. The Endicott survey also indicates that 96.3 percent of the staff believes that teachers support students in assuming responsibility for their learning, and this is echoed by 91.7 percent of the parents. When a school community works together to create a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture, it fosters an environment with high academic and behavioral expectations for all students, who share ownership for and pride in their school.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- parents
- school board
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The school is striving toward creating equitable and inclusive classroom environments, providing access to many academic experiences for students, and populating courses throughout the curriculum with students generally reflecting the diversity of the student body. These efforts help to foster heterogeneity and move the school toward realizing its 21st century learning expectations. There are 3 academic levels: honors/AP level 9, level 8, and level 5. Some required core academic courses, such as Civics, are not differentiated by academic level. Other options for non-leveled classes include World History, Physical Science, and most elective classes. The school provides co-taught sections for some core academic courses, (i.e., science, math, social studies, and English). The students identified with learning needs either through 504 Plans or IEPs in these classes occasionally outnumber those students who are not identified. Many of these students are in the same classes as a by-product of master scheduling (e.g., traveling from their co-taught English class to their co-taught biology class). Nevertheless, the principal adheres to the philosophy that all students should have the opportunity to enroll in Advanced Placement courses, and she regularly articulates this with her mantra: "raise the bar and close the gap." Some AP courses require a prerequisite, such as the successful completion of Biology I before enrolling in AP Biology and the majority of the math courses - most of which have prerequisites. Teachers also report that many of the co-taught classes have greater enrollment of special education students and are larger than sections of higher academic courses such as level 8 and honors/AP. Endicott survey results indicate 70.7 percent of students agree that they have an opportunity to take courses in which students of varying levels of ability are enrolled. In response to the survey question regarding whether or not their children have the opportunity to enroll in courses with students of varying levels of ability, 90.4 percent of parents agree that their children do have this opportunity. As the school moves toward fostering consistent heterogeneous experiences for all students, it will ensure appropriate rigor for all students, so they can be intellectually curious, contributing members of a global society.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The school has a formal ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the building who knows the student well and helps the students toward achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The house advisory program affords all students the opportunity to meet weekly with an adult who is not his/her academic teacher. House activities and curricular themes are designed by the school climate committee, which is comprised of teachers and an administrator. The school climate committee began revamping the house program in 2011, when house groups were arranged by grade and gender. They had previously been arranged by gender, but with mixed grades. With the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, the school climate committee introduced a newly designed curriculum for house that focuses on quarterly reviews of student report cards, goal-setting, civic opportunities, and review of co-curricular activities. At the end of the 2014-2015 school year, the school climate committee suggested feedback around creating a more positive school climate through the house program. In the fall of 2015, the school ran a school climate day for half of the school day, during which time students chose teacher-led workshops based on their own interests. The school administers annual surveys to gather feedback on the house advisory program. While the house program is a consistent part of the weekly school schedule, the Endicott survey indicates that only 52.8 percent of students believe there is a formal program in place that provides them the opportunity to meet regularly with an adult, in addition to the school counselor, who knows them well. Other programs that foster relationships between adults and students include myriad clubs and athletic teams advised or coached by their teachers. The school's continuous refinement of the house program will continue to engender a positive school culture that encourages the development of 21st century skills for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

The principal and faculty members collaborate to improve student learning through professional development by engaging in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning. In addition, the principal dedicates formal time to implement professional development. She encourages teachers to use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The principal is given significant autonomy by the superintendent and board of education to determine the professional development needs of the faculty. For example, the two district professional development days for the 2015-2016 school year were mainly dedicated to orienting teachers to delivering effective lessons during a 90-minute period block schedule as the school prepares to transition to a new schedule in the 2016-2017 school year. In addition, teachers report being supported by the principal when it comes to seeking out and attending professional development workshops outside of the district, even during the school day. The principal secures the necessary substitute teachers and funds the professional development. Led by the school's administrators, faculty members have been given the opportunity to read and discuss articles and books on best practice. Teachers have been given the opportunity to attend training at Eastside Community School in New York City, and some teachers have attended training in sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP). The school's administrators provide PLC time for teachers of the four core academic disciplines and world languages. More than 65 percent of teachers report that professional development programs enable them to acquire and use skills to improve instruction and assessment, while 67.6 percent of teachers report that input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluating their teaching plays an important role in improving their instructional practices. In anticipation of the transition to a new schedule in the 2016-2017 school year, the school's administrators are planning to afford more opportunities for interdisciplinary teacher collaboration. In an effort to improve a focus on student-centered learning, administrators offer feedback to those teachers whom they formally evaluate on lesson plans and the execution of lessons. Continuing to support professional learning opportunities for faculty, creating a more consistent model to incorporate professional learning in to the regular school-day schedule for all teachers, and collaborating to reflect on the impact of professional development on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, will result in greater efficacy in fostering 21st century skills among all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

School leaders use a research-based evaluation and supervision process that focuses on improving student learning. In accordance with the State of Connecticut Department of Education's required System for Educator Evaluation and Development (S.E.E.D.), the district's teacher evaluation plan provides teachers with constructive feedback after formal and informal observations. Teachers meet with administrators to set student learning outcomes (SLOs) and track and discuss the data at midyear and summative conferences. The Norwalk Public School District uses the Danielson Group evaluation rubric to set expectations and guide the yearly evaluation process for all teachers. The intention is for teachers to be able to improve their practices in the classroom and to be accountable for student performance. Administrators are assigned to oversee specific departments and to work with teachers within the respective departments to offer feedback on lesson plans, activities, and assessments. Administrators have been trained in the use of the rubrics, meet regularly with teachers both formally and informally, and reflect on best practice during these meetings. In addition, teachers are supported by the administration if they find professional development opportunities that they believe will enhance their development as practitioners. The effective use of the researched-based evaluation and supervision model provides important feedback to teachers through regular conferences, reflection on instructional practices, and data reflection, resulting in improved teaching methods and student learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

The organization of time supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of students. Currently, 74 out of 132 teachers are scheduled for regular PLC meeting periods to reflect on instructional practices, review data on formative and summative assessments, and review progress toward SLO goals. Some of the 74 teachers are able to meet every other day based on the bell schedule, while others meet less frequently. The current bell schedule, in its final year of use, features 8 periods per day at 44 minutes each. Students in the graduating classes of 2017 and 2018 are required to earn a minimum of 20 total credits in order to graduate and are encouraged to enroll in at least 6.5 credits each year. They are required to earn 5 credits per year in order to be promoted to the next year. Students in the graduating class of 2020 and beyond are required to earn 25 credits in order to graduate and are encouraged to enroll in at least 8 credits in grade 9, 7 credits in grades 10 and 11, and 6.5 credits in grade 12. There are a variety of curricular programs offered to enhance or assist students in their accumulation of credits, including Center for Global Studies, 23 Advanced Placement courses, double or extra periods for those students identified with learning needs, ESL classes, and summer school credit recovery programs. The administration affords flexibility for holding special schedules such as school climate day and orientation activities, which help the school achieve its goals to maintain a positive school climate. The switch to a 90-minute block bell schedule commencing at the start of the 2016-2017 school year is intended to facilitate more formal collaborative time for teachers and offer a greater number of courses for students. Once the school transitions to a new bell schedule, there can be a greater focus on meaningful reflection and collaboration for all teachers, and students can be afforded more course options to achieve the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

Teachers' student load and class size enable them to meet the learning needs of most students. The *Comprehensive Group Contract between Norwalk Board of Education and the Norwalk Federation of Teachers* indicates agreement that class size at the secondary level will not be in excess of 28 students per class if possible, as found in culinary classes, which adhere to a cap of 24 students to maintain safety standards. Co-taught classes are held to 28 students per section, ensuring that the teacher-student ratio is 1:14. The number of students identified as having learning needs in co-taught classes, either through IEPs or 504 Plans does, on occasion, exceed the number of students who are not identified. There are some exceptions to the aforementioned contract's 28-student threshold, including some music sections in which the integrity of the course would be compromised with a section size limited to 28. Teacher class assignments are also addressed in the contract, which states that "high school teachers shall not teach more than 5 classes per day," and will have a maximum student load of 130 with the exception of music teachers and physical education/health teachers; the latter can teach up to 10 classes per semester and have a maximum caseload of 280 students. An examination of class size conducted in April 2014 indicates that the administrators schedule classes within the acceptable limits set forth in the contract. Students believe that class sizes are reasonable, as 78.9 percent agrees as indicated in their Endicott survey responses. The survey also shows that 59.3 percent of teachers agree that the learning needs of individual students can be met, based on their class sizes, while 65.5 percent of parents believe that class sizes allow the teachers to meet the individual learning needs of their children. The school provides reasonable class sizes, which supports the core values and the students' ability to meet the 21st century learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- parents
- Endicott survey

# Standard 5 Indicator 8

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## Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. There are four other school administrators, known as housemasters. Through collecting and reviewing weekly lesson plans, housemasters are able to see that student-driven activities are utilized in the classrooms. As indicated in the Endicott survey, 76.9 percent of the staff believes the principal and other school-based administrators provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Teachers report that the principal and the housemasters are very supportive of their professional development opportunities, and they delegate responsibilities to teachers in the school, allowing them to take ownership of their professional practice. The principal has scheduled professional development on district assigned dates in accordance with the specific needs of the professional staff (e.g., block scheduling, sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and student centered learning). The school administrators meet with teachers during their PLCs to discuss grade-level needs and subject-specific courses. The teachers stated the principal uses the phrase "raise the bar, close the gap" and has been working hard to push students to challenge themselves to foster equitable opportunities for all students, as she encourages them to enroll in higher level classes. The leadership and collaboration among the principal, school leaders, and teachers ensure that instructional leadership is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 9

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## Conclusions

The teachers, students, and parents are involved in the meaningful and defined roles in the school's decision making process that promotes responsibility and ownership. While 49.5 percent of students and 61.3 percent of parents report they have input in important decisions made at the high school, 74 percent of staff members believe that teachers, students, and parents are meaningfully involved in the decision making to promote an atmosphere of responsibility and ownership. Teachers and administrators participate in committees to make decisions in school, such as the building data team, the safety committee, school governance council, school excellence committee, school climate committee, and rubric committee. Students stated the administrators and teachers are very willing to listen to them. The senior class president explained that classmates approached her about graduation caps and gowns and being united with one color, and she met with the principal who was very supportive of the students' recommendation. Seniors now graduate united, all in blue, having started with the Class of 2016. Students also participate in school climate surveys, school climate committee, student advisory council, student government, and the school governance council. Parents may participate in three different parent support groups. The Hispanic parent association welcomes parents with Spanish as their first language to participate in their parent group and provides them with opportunities to express their concerns and ideas. The parents club serves the entire parent population, providing parents with opportunities to express their input and thoughts. The school governance council is a forum in which all stakeholders can be active participants in the school's decision making process. The principal has established an open door culture by which students and parents feel welcome to voice concerns and ideas. Teachers are comfortable approaching any administrator to discuss lessons and get feedback. There is a variety of ways that teachers, students, and parents are involved in the decision making process, which enhances responsibility and shared ownership.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 10

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## Conclusions

Teachers often initiate leadership that improves the school and increases student engagement. Through PLCs, teachers in core subjects and world languages meet regularly to improve student learning. Some teachers use this time to work on common formative assessments and align lesson plans to the curriculum. Teachers have the opportunity to provide students with a more hands-on experience through programs such as the medical academy, which was initiated by a teacher, and Project Lead the Way. Approximately 31 teachers have been trained in the sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP) which makes curriculum more accessible for ELL students. Teachers are trained to create lessons for students of all backgrounds. It is anticipated that the new block schedule will allow for more student-centered learning with more depth into curricula. Teachers stated the house advisory program has been adjusted by the teachers over the past few years and that the new format for house is an improvement. Through the program, they are able to create a relationship with groups of students who would normally not be together in course sections. Although teachers have seen an improvement within the house format, they would like to see a more career-driven focus and support for students on the vocational track. Due to the number of students coming to Norwalk with different cultural backgrounds and limited education, the district instituted the Norwalk International Academy (NIA), a year-round program, for the city's middle schools and high schools. Most of these students range from 16 to 18 years of age and have completed only a few grades of elementary school. NIA offers intensive ESL at basic levels to assist students in reaching academic success at the high school by addressing basic math skills and literacy needs. The program is free throughout the year and supported by grant money in the summer. Moreover, groups of teachers have not only worked on curriculum and assessment, but have also helped to institute the special olympics/unified sports team program and are publishing the International Baccalaureate program accreditation. These programs have benefited from teacher initiative, collaboration, and creativity. According to the self-study, "administrators create these groups and develop teacher leaders by guiding teachers to implement these programs. By taking initiative and leadership roles, teachers help to improve the school and ultimately enhance student engagement." Hence, due to the dedication, initiative, and collegiality of the professional staff, the school can continually improve learning opportunities for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 5 Indicator 11

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## Conclusions

The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations; however, in recent years, there has been transitions of multiple superintendents and central office administrators, and this has been an impediment. Teachers, administrators, board of education members, the new superintendent, and the assistant superintendents (called chiefs), agree that communication among these parties was inadequate under the previous district administration. Moreover, only 48.1 percent of the staff members believe that the school board, superintendent, and principal collaborated at that time in the process of achieving learning expectations; however, with the arrival of new members of the central office administrative team, the faculty and staff now anticipate increased communication and work toward providing the school with the necessary materials and support. The board of education commended the principal for her autonomous leadership during that tumultuous time. With the recent turnover in central office leadership positions, the school board, new superintendent, and principal work toward a collaborative relationship to promote 21st century learning expectations, assist students in achieving expectations for learning, and close the achievement gap.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

# Standard 5 Indicator 12

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## Conclusions

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making opportunities to lead the school. According to the Endicott survey, 65.7 percent of teachers believe the school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school, while 75.9 percent of parents agree. The school board and central office administrators have commended the principal on her autonomy, decision making, and ability to lead the school. The principal implemented the PLC teams a year before this practice was required by the district, and the school's data team meets with PLCs to discuss evidence for success. The school board clearly stated that the principal is trusted and given autonomy within school and district policies. The principal's vision, "raise the bar, close the gap," has engendered a high level of confidence in her effective use of funds to support equity and student achievement. The principal regularly communicates her belief that students of all academic levels and demographics can achieve high levels of rigor. There are a few programs in place to assist ELL students with achieving academic success, and students of all academic levels have the opportunity to challenge themselves and take Advanced Placement classes. The principal delegates responsibility to staff members, giving them opportunities to take ownership of new initiatives. The school board and superintendent have been confident in the principal's ability to make decisions, implement initiatives, and lead the school to fully realize the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school board
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

# Standard 5 Commendations

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## Commendation

The positive school climate shared by students, faculty, and parents built around the principal's strong leadership and communication

## Commendation

The staff members' commitment to all students

## Commendation

The shared ownership of school safety and the house advisory program

## Commendation

The myriad opportunities for teacher leadership, professional development, and professional collaboration

## Commendation

The various opportunities for students and parents to offer feedback and have an impact on school culture

## Commendation

The autonomy afforded by the superintendent and board of education to the principal to implement her vision for the school

# Standard 5 Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Create more equitable and consistent PLC time for teachers to reflect on student data, curriculum, and instruction

## Recommendation

Continue to provide professional development on instructional strategies for the anticipated 90-minute block schedule

# Standard 6 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The school has numerous direct intervention strategies that are timely, coordinated, and appropriate for all students, including those identified and at risk, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Universal instruction is active in all core and elective classes for all students. Teachers report that they provide tier one interventions as appropriate within each classroom. These interventions may include differentiated instruction and assignments in collaboration with a special education teacher, student-centered learning, and progress monitoring using formative assessment and summative assessments, which are tailored to the assignment. One teacher stated that he differentiates his instruction using modified assignments, grade tiering, reducing the number of multiple-choice responses, and giving quizzes orally. Another teacher stated that she uses Google Classroom to post assignments, graded assignment completions, and student reminders. She added that she uses Remind, a real time messaging service, as a way to text information to parents, students, and teachers confidentially. Students and teachers stated that there is open communication between them. Teachers are available to students before and after school, during the student/teacher free periods, and during a portion of the lunch period for students who request extra assistance and guidance on assignments. In addition, school-wide academic supports include the program, "relevant academic needed support aimed at college-bound kids (RANSACK)" an after-school program offered in the guidance career center, which provides peer tutoring from National Honor Society members three days per week. There are also supports for students with significant social/emotional needs, which was mentioned by both teachers and students. Intervention services are provided to students by the nurse, a Team Talk Counselor, school social worker, and school counselors. There is also a bridge of services to various outreach programs in the community as necessary. In January 2016, the school added a reading course using the Read 180 program, providing tier two intervention to some freshman students scoring below proficiency on a universal reading test. It was reported that Math 180 will be available in the next school year for students who score below proficiency on a universal math test.

One of the housemasters uses PowerSchool to run attendance reports on each of his students every two weeks. He red flags students with a high number of unexcused absences and will intervene through various means such as phone calls home, email to teachers and parents, and meetings with students, which involves review of absences and their impact on their grades. Intervention strategies available are RANSACK, teacher tutoring, and the youth development program (YDP). The housemaster and the school counselors also review reports of students with Ds or Fs in any of the four core subject areas, (i.e., English, math, science and history), and meet with the student, parents, teachers, and support staff members to devise plans of success for the students. For school-wide behavioral support and intervention, positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) is used to decrease negative behaviors, promote positive behaviors, and improve school culture.

The school also offers individualized services for at-risk students, who are identified as needing special education services as identified on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Various intervention models are available to students with IEPs, ranging from inclusive programs such as daily living skills, functional academics, vocational skills, and adaptive physical education. Special education teachers also report that they co-teach a variety of core classes to support students' academic success using accommodations and modifications to curriculum assignments as stated in each student's IEP. The school also offers academic assistance to students with an IEP, providing individual and small group support in academic areas as indicated in therein. Speech and language therapy is also available to assist students in achieving their optimum skills. Students who have a 504 Plan receive an accommodation plan to receive the support to access the curriculum. Due to the variety of direct intervention strategies available that are delivered in a timely, coordinated manner, students, including those who are identified or at risk, are well supported to maximize their achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- students
- department leaders
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 6 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The school comprehensively provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services, and 68 percent of parents and students agree. The district uses a variety of means to provide information using the guide for students and families, the Norwalk Public Schools handbook, the district and school websites, emails, special presentations, PowerSchool, Naviance, and social media, (e.g., Facebook, Remind, and Twitter). The professional staff also updates the community on news and events scheduled at the school through local newspapers and television and radio stations. The self-study states that the library media center webpage provides access to its collection and catalog of texts, documents, periodicals, and reference materials; however, the library media specialist states that she has no periodicals and very limited print reference materials, and the library media center webpages have old or outdated information and do not provide direct links to its print and non-print collection.

Information is often available in dual language format, in Spanish and English, and there are interpreters/translators available for other languages. In addition, there are active parent groups that are conducted in English and Spanish, (e.g., the Hispanic parent's group and the parent's club, through which parents provide support to other parents). The website has a Google Translate button for users to translate the pages from English to the language of choice, and, while Google Translate is not perfect, it is nonetheless beneficial for those languages for which a translator is not always available. Also, the school counseling department has a page written in Spanish with important dates of events for the year, featuring a page for new arrivals and sub pages with links to the College Board and FAFSA websites in Spanish. The school-based health center not only provides annual sports physicals, immunizations, access to the mobile dental lab, but also informs students and parents of seasonal information and interventions offered through a variety of community resources. The school provides information to parents about student support services, in a timely manner using a variety of sources and at times in dual languages, thereby enabling each student to achieve the learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- school website

- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 6 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

Support services staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. PowerSchool and Naviance allow school counselors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents to communicate information pertinent to student outcomes and future planning. Students can access both of these web-based programs at home, on school computers, and on their own portable devices. Parents receive alerts from a messaging system that may be sent through home phones, cell phones, emails, and texts. The library media center webpage has limited amount of information on the school's website, but access to the collection catalog is found on the district's webpage.

The nurses office uses SNAP Health Center Student Health Records Management Software to document health office visits, injuries, illness, and all other health-related documentation. Health care personnel produce reports on the frequency of students visits, and they distinguish trends, identify possible concerns with individual students, make ongoing health assessments, and create appropriate referrals. However, the school-based health center uses paper charting and files, which are stored in a secure locked cabinet. Electronic charting will reportedly be available to the nurses office for the 2016-2017 school year.

Technology is used to enhance instruction; however, availability of information technology (IT) support personnel is sparse, as there are only five assistants to be shared across 19 schools throughout the city. The lack of IT support impedes the use of available technology. Staff members are expected to submit help tickets through SchoolDude IT Incident and Help Desk Management software. The teachers stated that it could be several days or weeks before someone arrives to solve a problem. This concern is also expressed as a need in the the self-study, which states: "Technology is not repaired or maintained in a timely manner." Nevertheless, the technology department provides extensive tech tools and professional development modules on the district's website, which are clearly organized and and readily accessible. PowerSchool is not only used by teachers, counselors, and administrators to monitor student achievement and proactively intervene to help struggling students, but it has also streamlined the special education process by linking access to IEP Direct software. Technology needs for the students who require significant visual, audio, and/or physical accommodations are managed through the coordinator of special education and the assistive technology consultant. Teachers indicate that the school's technology infrastructure in past years was not able to support the devices available; however, progress has been made recently in the number of network switches and other hardware upgrades. While these upgrades have not resolved all connectivity problems, teachers find that they have nonetheless resulted in a significant and positive impact on WiFi connectivity. Consistent and reliable WiFi throughout the building will afford support services staff access to technology that will enable them to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- school website

# Standard 6 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a written, developmental program; meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling; engage in individual and group meetings with all students; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The school counseling department offers a variety of services to meet the needs of the students. There are eight school counselors, serving approximately 1,700 students. Each counselor is responsible for approximately 220 students with the exception of the director of guidance, who carries a 60 percent caseload in addition to her administration responsibilities. There are bilingual guidance counselors, who speak Spanish, and staff and services available for students and parents whose first language is not English, (e.g., a district-wide interpreter, who attends PPT meetings and parent meetings as needed). In addition, there are periodic written communications in both Spanish and English available to students and parents. The school counseling website and email are examples of using technology to inform the community about academic, career, and other resources available to students and parents. Counselors meet with students at least once per year and assist students with creating student success plans and navigating the course selection process. Counselors are available to students and parents, who may secure an appointment by filling out a request form or emailing. School counselors also attend 504 and IEP meetings for students on their caseload. The counselors report that these meetings consume much of their time, especially in the spring.

Within the last five years, the school counseling department dedicated two counselors to the freshman class. These counselors are responsible for transition programs from the middle school to the high school that involve collaboration with grade 8 school counselors to discuss student information for students who are at risk, have 504 Plans or receive special education services as stated in an IEP. School counselors conduct "push ins," which are eighth grade class lessons that assist grade 8 students with course selection for grade 9. The counselors use the High School 101 (HS 101) web-based program to discuss expectations and provide an open forum for 8th graders to ask questions about the transition process. The counselors also provide class lessons for grade 9 students to further discuss the transition from middle school to high school once enrolled in the latter. Over the four years that students are enrolled at the high school, counselors use the Naviance Family Connection online tool with all students to assist in college exploration and the college planning process, and to track the student acceptance rate to college. The information is accessible to students and families.

Six school counselors are dedicated to students in grades 10, 11, and 12 and remain with the student until graduation. The school counselors' caseloads are split alphabetically with the only exceptions being the two counselors who work with students in the Center for Global Studies (CGS) inter-district magnet program, divided by geographic location. School counselors provide direct one-to-one contact with each of their students to discuss academic and grade-related information. The support staff consists of one 10-month bilingual receptionist, three social workers (1.8 FTE), and a school psychologist, who work collaboratively with school counselors, health services staff members, teachers, families, and students. Two social workers and the school psychologist meet with students based on their IEP goals and objectives. The Kids in Crisis Team Talk Counselor provides additional support to regular education students who are experiencing a heightened level of anxiety, stress, and crisis.

The school uses technology to meet the needs of students and families. School counselors use their department website and send mailings to notify students and families about ongoing programs available. In addition to the

aforementioned Naviance Family Connection, other programs include the college life program, the junior/senior college panel, an academic fair and financial aid night, and the senior internship program. School counselors meet with students to discuss PSAT and SAT results and urge students to participate in the free, online Khan Academy program. It is noted in the self-study that the developmental counseling services curriculum was created by Norwalk Public Schools' pupil personnel services leaders in 2002. The counselors have created a more current four-year guide to career and college planning, which is available in print and on the school counseling website to assist students and families to identify the importance of early academic planning. The school counseling department also has a computer lab that serves as a career center for activities such as mentor meeting space, college planning, and after-school tutoring.

Examples of school counselors' collaboration with teachers include providing assistance in college essay writing through English classes, assisting in instruction of interviewing skills with the dramatic arts teacher, attending round table discussions within classes, and having a lunch duty once per week. For students who are at risk academically, the school counselors monitor student grades using PowerSchool two times per quarter and communicate their findings with the student, teachers, and housemaster. These efforts may result in a meeting with the students to assist them in using problem-solving strategies and being self-reflective. School counselors oversee students with 504 Plans, and a copy of each student's accommodation page is sent to respective teachers each year.

School counselors facilitate peer mediation, and, in conjunction with the National Honor Society (NHS), they host an after-school peer tutoring program, called "relevant academic needed support aimed at college-bound kids" (RANSACK!), which provides students with a structured environment in which they complete homework after school with help from NHS tutors. Counselors collaborate and communicate with outside providers regarding student concerns and issues and regularly consult with school personnel, the nurse practitioner, and social worker from the school-based health center regarding individual student concerns. Once per month, the school preparedness committee, which includes the school psychologist and social worker, meets to develop ways to proactively address and respond to potential school-wide crises. In order to provide additional support in times of crisis, community resources are utilized such as "Kids in Crisis" (which provides free, round-the-clock help for Connecticut children, teens, and families), 211, the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and juvenile probation. School counseling services have a multitude of vehicles to address students' personal, academic, career, and college counseling, not only by collaborating with personnel within the school community, but also by liaising with outreach programs to better meet the 21st century student learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teachers
- parents
- department leaders
- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 6 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services; use an appropriate referral process; conduct ongoing student health assessments; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

An adequate number of certified/licensed personnel to provide health services and direct intervention services are provided, furnishing preventative health services and direct intervention services as well as ongoing health assessment. Two intervention models are used - the nurses' office and the school-based health center, which are housed near each other for coordination of services. The nurses' office is staffed by one full-time nurse and one part-time nurse, who works three days per week. The nurses' office has two rooms containing two beds each; a room with two beds divided by a curtain; and a third room which can be used as an examination room or a conference room. Documentation of student visits and records are recorded digitally on the SNAP program. Students have access to the nurses' office during the school day. The office provides preventative and ongoing care such as measuring blood pressure, conducting vision and hearing exams, administering medically prescribed medications, and monitoring of students upon request from a doctor. The office also administers direct intervention for minor injuries and illnesses.

The school-based health center is grant funded and is staffed with one full-time nurse practitioner, one social worker, a receptionist, and social work supervisor who are accessible from 9:00 a.m to 2:00 p.m. on school days. The center is overseen by an off-site medical director - a physician from a local community health center, who makes scheduled visits twice per month. Moreover, a local psychiatrist has scheduled visits every other week. Medical records are all paper based and are kept in a designated locked cabinet, and the school has plans to use an electronically-based record system for the 2016-2017 year. The school-based health center follows HIPPA confidentiality regulations. Enrollment applications and parent permission forms are given to each individual student at the beginning of each school year, and there is no charge for services to the students. Individualized services may include dental exams via a mobile unit twice per year; physical examinations; diagnosis and treatment of acute and chronic illnesses; care of minor injuries; immunizations; nutrition counseling; weight management; and reproductive health services. The center has numerous in-house services and community outreach programs that focus on issues such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse; these services are available to students during the school day. Students and parents are also afforded access to myriad in-house and community providers and programs, e.g., mentors/peer mediation, a DCF support worker, the Den for Grieving Kids family center, Norwalk Public Housing Authority, Horizons academic summer enrichment program, after-school youth development program, Wishbone summer academy, Juvenile Review Board, and Americares free clinic. The center completed an assessment survey of the entire district in 2012, which addressed 94 participants who had previously used the school-based health center. The data addressed student satisfaction, and this informed their practice in the schools. The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff in the nurses office and in the school-based health center. The scope of the health services are comprehensive and address students' immediate and ongoing medical and social/emotional needs; as a result, the health services support the core values of the school.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 6 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

Library media services are minimally integrated into curriculum and instructional practices; yet, there is an adequate number of certified personnel and staff. The library media center is open every day from 7:15 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The library media specialist is available from 7:15 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., while the library media paraprofessional stays until 3:00 p.m. The school library media specialist engages in collection development, including the selection and renewal of online databases and collaborative learning, to support curricula. The faculty's use of library media services is minimal. The self-study indicates that there are assured research experiences for grades 9-12, but collaboration between the library media specialist and teachers is sparse. While all students are expected to write a research paper, the library media specialist is not involved in determining the research skills that must be demonstrated. The library media specialist reports that she learns about plans and initiatives secondhand. Upon request, the library media specialist is available to help teachers with annotated bibliographies, citing sources, database research, and using Boolean operators to narrow search results.

The library media specialist is responsible for selecting materials and digital resources which best support curriculum by communicating with individual teachers and departments regarding purchases. The library media specialist's support of curriculum includes online databases, collaborative learning, creative purchasing, and grant writing, which has enabled the purchase of new books for the collection. Both the library media specialist and her supervisor share concern over a lack of funding. The library has many empty shelves, resulting from direction from central office administrators to weed the books. The library media specialist believes that the next step would have been the provision of monies to replace the books, but this has not transpired. Funding for the databases, with the exception of the online ICONN research engine, is drawn from the principal's fund. Turnitin.com is purchased through the school's subscription to the Connecticut Library Consortium. The library media specialist's supervisor is supportive of the library media specialist's purchasing online databases for student research papers.

The school is participating in a two-year professional development program entitled Library Learning Commons model to explore the concept of having the library media center provide a welcoming common space that encourages exploration, creation, and collaboration between students and teachers; however, the school is three years out of date with the program, and there was little consistency with the participants who were sent to the meetings over the past two years. There are no library media specialists in the district except at the two high schools. Currently, there is no information literacy curriculum and, without one, the professional staff cannot embed lessons with other disciplines. As found in the self-study, the library media center is not sufficient for implementing curriculum. The library media specialist informally questions teachers after a lesson to see whether or not the material met their expectations and what could be improved for the future; however, the library media specialist has no part in the grading process and is not involved in curriculum revisions.

The library media specialist and the library services program are of limited access and availability to individual student users. Library media center rules, budget constraints, limited technology availability, and lack of a library skills curriculum, impede access to the services, program, and facility. In addition to these factors, there is a void in outreach for the purposes of collaborative work with teachers on projects and that use/develop 21st century research skills to ensure that students meet the school's expectations for learning. Moreover, there is no evidence that the library media center staff conducts ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services for students and staff.

The library media center is used for study halls, for students who want to read, and for teacher-reserved computer lab use; however, students state that, due to multiple study halls assigned, even pass-bearing students are often not able to use the library media center's technology or work spaces to complete their individual

assignments. Students are not allowed to enter the library media center without a pass from a teacher with the exception of the National Honor Society students, who possess a "gold pass" that allows them unlimited entry without restrictions. Currently, there is a black and white printer available to pass-bearing students in the library media center. As more departments have Chromebooks and students have their own devices and other technologies available, less patrons visit the library media center to use the computers. The library media center has four Chromebook carts to lend to different departments on an as-needed basis. When the library media center is welcoming to all students and staff and reflects a culture of proactive collaboration, the facility and the program will be able to serve as the curricular hub of the school, ensuring that its resources enhance student learning and achievement of the school's 21st century skills.

## **Sources of Evidence**

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 6 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations; provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students; and perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

The variety of certified/licensed personnel and support staff include ten special education teachers, a department chair/special education teacher, ten paraprofessionals, a secretary/paraprofessional, 1.8 FTE social workers, a Kids-in-Crisis social worker, two ELL teachers, two ELL paraprofessionals, two ELL teachers (shared with Norwalk High School), two school-based health center employees, two nurses, an occupational therapist (district shared), a speech-language pathologist, a physical therapist (district shared), an adaptive PE teacher (district shared), a teacher of the visually impaired (district shared), a teacher of the hearing impaired (district shared), a school-to-career coordinator (shared with Norwalk High School as well as the Norwalk Early College Academy within Norwalk High School), and a transitional skills coordinator (shared with Norwalk High School). Department and quarterly district-wide meetings, PLCs, common planning time, and professional development are scheduled within the special education department.

Special education teachers' caseloads range from 13-18 students with IEPs, while school counselors serve as case managers for students with 504 accommodations. The caseloads of some special education teachers, related service providers and support staff coupled with additional responsibilities such as testing, report writing and curriculum modifications have stretched these service providers to the limit. Both the social workers and the school psychologist commented on the large number of students who qualify for their services. The board of education reported that they have requested 3.6 million dollars to institute the recommendations by Capital Region Education Council (CREC) to reduce the large number of out-placements and improve the services provided to special education students.

The school offers individualized services for at-risk students who are identified to receive 504 classroom accommodations and special education services as identified in Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which specify individualized accommodations and modifications to aid the students' success within the academic setting. At the beginning of each school year, special education case managers provide student IEP modifications and accommodations to students' teachers, and school counselor 504 case managers provide student 504 accommodation plans to the teachers. PowerSchool is linked to IEP Direct for teacher access; however, 504 information is not yet available on PowerSchool. Various intervention models are available to IEP students, ranging from an inclusive programs such as daily living skills, functional academics, vocational skills, and adaptive physical education. Special education teachers co-teach a variety of core classes to support the students' academic success using accommodations and modifications to assignments as stated in students' IEPs. All special education students are provided with inclusive opportunities throughout their day, with at least two classes with non-disabled peers. The school also offers academic assistance to IEP students with individual and small group support in academic areas as indicated in the IEPs. Speech and language therapy is also available to assist students in achieving their optimum skills. The social worker reports that, aside from direct student interventions as prescribed in students' IEPs, she also leads a social skills group for students with social thinking challenges. Co-curricular activities are available to identified students, (e.g., Best Buddies, Unified Sports, after-school clubs, and sports).

Students participate in formal, individualized assessments for initial or triennial evaluations with data used to

identify and place students in classes with the necessary supports for their learning needs. Data is collected by special education teachers and classroom teachers, who cull work samples, progress reports, observations, and student feedback in order to monitor progress on the students' goals and objectives as well as the appropriateness of modifications and accommodations. Related services testing is individualized and administered by the appropriate related services certified/licensed personnel.

As of 2014, the total percentage of English language learners (ELL) jumped from 12 percent to 14 percent district wide. Additional classes and staff were added in December 2014 to accommodate more ELL students receiving instructional time in the classroom to support their learning; moreover, forty teachers in the building are trained in using the sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP). The Norwalk International Academy was developed to support English language learners in response to an influx of students with a limited interruption in formal education (SLIFE). In addition, supports for families and students are in place such as the parent support group, the Hispanic parents group, and translators who are available for PPT and 504 meetings. The adequate support services for identified students enables the delivery of services and supports for students' achievement of the 21st century learning expectations.

## **Sources of Evidence**

- self-study
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 6 Commendations

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## Commendation

School counseling services for each student that include personal, academic, career and college counseling

## Commendation

The school's health services that include many forms of preventative and direct interventions to address the health and emotional wellness of students

## Commendation

The timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations

## Commendation

The support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, that ensure inclusive learning opportunities and individualized accommodations and modifications to maximize engagement and success

# Standard 6 Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Provide a wide range of library media materials, technologies, and other information services to support of the school's curriculum and 21st century learning expectations

## Recommendation

Address technology and remaining Wi-Fi issues to enhance instruction and increase student and professional access to resources

## Recommendation

Establish proactive collaboration between the library media specialist and teachers to ensure that all students are afforded their assured research experiences, thereby helping students practice authentic 21st century skills

## Recommendation

Implement a system to collect feedback information from the constituents of health services, library media services, and special education in order to inform continuous improvement

## Recommendation

Examine the ratio of certified/licensed personnel to identified students to ensure the efficacy of services

# Standard 7 Indicator 1

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## Conclusions

The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, equipment, instructional materials and supplies, and ongoing professional development; however, the governing body provides only limited funding to support the implementation of a full range of technology support and curriculum revision. The school provides myriad school programs and services made possible with dependable funding, (e.g., athletics, band, and co-curricular activities). There is secured and reliable funding for both professional salaries and staff wages that is competitive with surrounding districts. Professional development has been made available to professional staff through in-house programs, external resources (such as the aforementioned visit to a New York City school), staff members teaching other staff members, and focused PLC time; however, teachers indicate concerns about long-term planning of necessary training for implementation of new programs such as the upcoming block scheduling. Some curriculum revision has been funded, such as recent revisions to Civics, Algebra, and level 1 world languages; however, the department curriculum revision frequency and sequence are inconsistent and unpredictable. Teachers report that there was spotty wireless Internet coverage and a regular disruption of service in the past. With recent upgrades of the network switches and wireless signal boosts, there is improved consistency in coverage, albeit still lacking. There is also a planned increase of bandwidth, (i.e., speed, from 1 gigabit (g) to 10 g during the summer of 2016 to ensure consistent, reliable, and fast network connections). In the past year, two technology liaisons were hired to assist staff with technology problems; this has had a positive effect on technology training and improved consistency in resolving basic issues. While the purchase of Chromebooks has increased technology access for teachers and students, there remains an inequitable distribution of technology, including the Chromebooks. Although progress has been made, teachers report that the current range of technology support makes it challenging to implement programs and best practices, such as the recent, school-wide adoption of student-centered learning techniques. The district provides dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, instructional materials and supplies, equipment, and sufficient professional and support staff. When the district governing board provides consistent funding for ongoing professional development, curriculum revision, and ubiquitous and robust technology resources, then all students will be more effectively able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Indicator 2

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## Conclusions

The school develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment, and keep the school clean on a daily basis. Professional and support staff use the SchoolDude notification system or an email chain of command with the designated housemaster to report maintenance and repair needs. Facilities staff determine priority response time such as immediate or that which can be rectified over the summer recess. The facilities director maintains and catalogues equipment as well as replacement of equipment, and has planned a change of processing maintenance requests from SchoolDude to Work Speed Property Operations Software, which will allow transparency of number of requests, types of requests, and time necessary for work completion. The designated housemaster works closely with custodial staff through emails and phone calls to ensure adequate and timely work requests such as service for after school functions or meetings. Classrooms, common areas and office spaces are generally clean and maintained; however, even though this has improved within the last year, teachers indicate that this pattern remains inconsistent throughout the building. The school employs fifteen full-time custodians, and the head custodian delineates assigned areas of the building that do not typically change or rotate, unless a custodian is absent. Students and parents report inconsistent satisfaction with cleanliness of the building, and staff members have indicated concern regarding the new district practice of outsourcing of custodial staff, as well as involuntary transfers, which have impacted the consistency of maintenance and cleanliness. When the delivery of maintenance and cleaning is consistent, then the physical plant will provide sufficient support for the delivery of the school's curriculum.

## Sources of Evidence

- facility tour
- teachers
- students
- parents
- central office personnel
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Indicator 3

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## Conclusions

The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes, and some staffing needs, but does not implement a long-range plan that addresses facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. The district office budgets funding for facility and technology needs. Since the district transitioned to site-based budgeting with per pupil allotment in October 2015, it has the necessary input to influence some long-term plans such as programs and services, as well as enrollment changes and staffing needs. The school's leaders have decided to allocate a portion of their budget in anticipation of the establishment of the International Baccalaureate diploma program to begin in September 2016. Based on an analysis of student interest in academic course work, two new teaching positions will be added: math and world languages. Although the staffing in the school counseling department falls within guidelines, staff, parents, and students have suggested the need of additional personnel to better serve the diverse student population. The administration, staff, parents, and students recognize a need for an additional social worker. Funding for the staffing of school counselors and social workers is under the purview of the central office administrators. The school has limited input for long-range plans regarding facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. In 2006, a major, \$72 million renovation occurred that included an addition to the school. Since then, there have been minimal capital improvements. Interior and exterior lighting fixtures in public areas such as the auditorium, large gym, and small gym have been changed to energy efficient lighting. There is a plan to update all lighting fixtures throughout the building within the next five years. Other projects, including replacement of the carpeting in the library, remain on hold until district funding is provided. Multiple capital improvements including the replacement of the sound system in the auditorium and upgrades within the sports complex were funded by the senators success fund parent group. The substantial size of the physical plant presents high demands on the limited maintenance and custodial personnel responsible for keeping the facilities clean, assisting with the set up of facilities for meetings, classrooms, conferences, and events, and maintaining the building and grounds. Classroom utilization is at 80 percent occupancy, and, although teachers and staff indicate the need for additional custodial support, there is no long-term facility plan to increase staffing. The district office follows the Connecticut State Department of Education technology plan, but has no long-term plans specific to the needs of the Norwalk community. Although teachers indicated that technology has improved within the last year, staff members and students expressed concerns regarding the unpredictability of Wi-Fi availability as well as the turn around time in addressing Wi-Fi and Internet issues. While the school has a clear long-term plan in place to implement and fund programs and studies, enrollment changes, and classroom staffing needs, there is no clear district plan to address staffing in support services or in building maintenance and custodial services, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. As the district works more closely with the school in addressing all staffing, facility, and technology needs, as well as capital improvements, the school community will better support students in achieving the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teachers
- school leadership

# Standard 7 Indicator 4

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## Conclusions

Faculty members and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget. The city and board of education's budget decisions impact the school's budget allocations. The timeline for the development of the budget is posted and made available to the public. In the 2015-2016 school year, there was a shift to school-based budgeting. This approach is aimed at providing each school with an equitable share of the net district budget based on the student enrollment in each school. Certain expenses, such as staffing within the special education, school guidance departments, and the music department, will continue to be budgeted by the central office. The remainder of the budget will be allocated directly to the school, based on enrollment. A portion of the school budget is shared with the Center for Global Studies magnet program, which, in return, shares a portion of its outside funding with the school. The school's leaders decide how to allocate its funds based on input received from school staff and the school governance council. Materials and supplies are allocated to each department to meet course related needs. Purchase order requests are processed by a designated administrative assistant. The school's instructional leaders and administrators are given a completed summary sheet on the status of budget allocations each year. The principal and other administrators speak publicly on behalf of the school budget at open board of education and board of finance meetings. The comprehensive process and involvement of all stakeholders in the budgeting decisions allows for adequate development and implementation of the budget, thus supporting students in achieving the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership

# Standard 7 Indicator 5

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## Conclusions

The school site and plant sufficiently supports the delivery of school programs and services. The facility underwent a renovate-as-new project in 2006. There is a full-time custodial staff that operates in three shifts, day and evening, who are responsible for cleanliness and maintenance of the school. A wide range of programs are hosted before and after school that involve a substantial number of students and use building space in which to operate, such as the youth development program, house advisory program, school-to-career, and SAT prep. Some teachers report that there is a lack of storage for equipment. There is a garden club that uses space just outside of the building to grow food that is donated to the local food pantry and seasonally sold during lunch. There is also a compost program that supports the garden club as well as serving as an authentic example of a waste management effort. The cafeteria is available before school for breakfast and lunch waves to accommodate all students. Informal feedback and formal surveys have resulted in changes in the food services operation that have lessened wait time for student meals, modified menu selections, and addressed specific needs of students. The Center for Global Studies functions as a separate magnet school is provided dedicated classroom space. The library and media center provides an area that allows students to work collaboratively in groups as well as individually for private and quiet study. Although the athletic fields, track, and tennis courts are maintained by the city's parks and recreation services division, the school uses them for both physical education and after-school activities. There is a new artificial turf football field, as well as a plan for updating the baseball fields and tennis courts within the next several years. The Endicott survey states that over 66 percent of students, 75 percent of staff, and 87 percent of parents agree that the physical plant and site support delivery of programs and services; consequently, the school site and plant support the delivery of quality school programs and services, and the school is able to commit to its core values and beliefs for all students.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teachers
- students
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

# Standard 7 Indicator 6

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## Conclusions

The school sufficiently maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. The school keeps documentation to verify that the school meets federal and state laws and is in compliance with local regulations. Most compliance reporting is kept on file at the central office; however, the school maintains copies of materials safety data sheets (MSDS) for storage of all chemicals housed in the building, as well as validation documentation for fire alarms, extinguishers, and the elevator. Food service inspection reports are kept on file at the school and are up to date. All areas of the building are handicap accessible. Ventilation and temperature control are monitored and regulated by Automated Building System (ABS) temperature control software. Although teacher and students report variations of temperature throughout the building, the building affords adequate ventilation, temperature, and air quality. Air quality control is checked periodically as mandated. Custodial staff receives OSHA training annually to stay updated on federal, state, and local mandates and requirements. The school complies with all federal, state and local regulations, assuring all stakeholders of a safe and well-maintained facility.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Indicator 7

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## Conclusions

The professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school. The Endicott survey indicates that 89.8 percent of the staff and 60.3 percent of parents agree that the professional staff actively engages parents and families as partners in each student's education. PowerSchool is the primary tool teachers use to communicate academic progress, assignments, attendance, and grades. Students who are in danger of failing or in danger of losing class credit are identified each quarter and a letter along with a hard copy of the quarterly report card is sent home. Each student's final report card is mailed home in June. Although the school's failure warning letter is only in English, counselors will follow up with a phone call home to those students who live in homes where parents speak Spanish. These phone calls are made by the guidance secretary, who is bilingual in both English and Spanish and is sensitive to the cultural differences within the Hispanic population, and her presence helps to create a welcoming atmosphere. A "meet the teachers night" is held in the fall. The program of studies and student handbook are available to families via the district's website. Although the website is in English, there is capability to translate the site to a multitude of different languages. The school counseling department recognizes the difficulties students face transitioning from middle school to high school and have taken steps to target this particular cohort of students. Two school counselors are dedicated solely to grade nine students. These counselors meet collaboratively with teachers, support staff, and the headmasters to review each student's progress on a regular basis and to develop a plan to help the student achieve academic success. The grade 9 counselors work closely with the middle school counselors and serve a critical role in preparing middle school students for high school. School counselors work with students and their families in a variety of settings to deliver important information. Evening programs are held periodically throughout the school year to expose parents and families to important topics including post secondary planning, the college application process, and the financial aid process. The school has reached out to identified families who have been less connected by providing these evening programs in both English and Spanish. A number of office support staff are fluent in Spanish and serve as translators on an as needed basis. Although students and teachers indicate that there are efforts made to engage all parents (especially the Spanish speaking population), they report that there is still work to be done in engaging all underrepresented parent and community populations. School counselors rely on input from classroom teachers and other support staff to identify students in need of support. The school counselors contact parents and families to relay school concerns. The school's administrators, faculty members, and support staff members recognize the important role they share with parents and families as partners in each student's education. The school has created a climate in which most stakeholders feel valued and appreciated. As the school continues to commit to building strong relationships with all parents and families, these partnerships will support students in achieving the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- students
- parents
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Indicator 8

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## Conclusions

The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. An active parent organization, the Parents' Club, works closely with the building principal. The principal has made an effort to involve the Hispanic community, and a separate Hispanic parents club was formed. An English/Spanish translator is available at these meetings. Both parent groups meet monthly with the building principal sharing information between the two entities. The leadership within the PTO keeps the parents informed of school initiatives as well as current events through their biweekly e-mail blasts. The school has taken advantage of many opportunities to partner with a variety of business, community, and higher education institutions, and these partnerships have supported student learning. The school has relationships with a number of post-secondary schools in the area. Students are able to participate in the Early College Experience (ECE) through the University of Connecticut, which allows students to earn college credit through the university while attending high school. Currently, a total of eight courses are available to students through the science, social studies, and world languages departments. Many of these courses are taught in conjunction with Advanced Placement courses. Students have the ability to earn college credits through the University of New Haven by enrolling in the Project Lead the Way engineering courses offered at the school. A partnership with the Norwalk Community College has enabled students to participate in the school's medical academy, which exposes them to a variety of medical careers. The partnership program with the community college also allows students to enroll in evening courses during the fall and spring semesters. The program, offered free of charge, enables students to accumulate college credits to jump start their post-secondary education. Students personal/social needs are addressed by a number of community partnerships. Kids in Crisis provides 24-hour emergency shelter, crisis counseling, and community educational programs. The Department for Children and Families provides a mentoring program. The Center for Hope provides bereavement services for those students in need. A dental mobile unit is available twice per year, providing students with free dental care. The Kiwanis International Key Club allows students to participate in service projects, through which students give back to the community. Students can also take advantage of a number of community-based programs that offer academic support. The Horizons program offers academic support for students. The Wishbone program provides the opportunity for students to attend summer college programs. The Carver Foundation provides funding for initiatives such as the Youth Development Program. The Career Center of Norwalk provides a mentoring program. The school counseling department has taken an active role in registering students for the free, on-line Khan Academy, which provides students with personalized tutoring for the SAT. Strong relationships with businesses also exist through the senior internship program and the Future Business Leaders of America club. The school-to-career office has established the McMahan-to-Man initiative in which young men get together to discuss career options. The women to women program allows alumnae to foster relationships with current students. A partnership with the Norwalk Maritime Aquarium allows students to participate in hands-on STEM activities. All students have access to dual enrollment opportunities as well as to programs that provide academic as well as social/personal support. The abundance of parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships supports students in achieving the expectations for learning.

## Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- parents
- community members
- school leadership

- Standard sub-committee

# Standard 7 Commendations

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## Commendation

The wide variety of programs and services for students that involve the majority of students, professional staff, and support staff

## Commendation

The parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that are accessible to all students and support their learning by providing academic, post-secondary/career planning, and personal/social development

## Commendation

The school's active outreach to Spanish speaking families who are less connected with the school

## Commendation

The transition process from middle school to high school that includes dedicated counselors who monitor the academic progress of each grade 9 student and develop action plans to help students in need of academic support

# Standard 7 Recommendations

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## Recommendation

Ensure adequate and dependable funding for a full range of technology support

## Recommendation

Ensure adequate funding to improve consistency of maintenance and cleanliness of the physical plant on a day-to-day basis

## Recommendation

Ensure dependable funding for appropriate levels of support staff for diverse populations

## Recommendation

Expand outreach efforts to include all underrepresented parents and families that could benefit from the various parent groups

# **FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES**

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This comprehensive evaluation report reflects the findings of the school's self-study and those of the visiting committee. It provides a blueprint for the faculty, administration, and other officials to use to improve the quality of programs and services for the students in this school. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

Since it is in the best interest of the students that the citizens of the district become aware of the strengths and limitations of the school and suggested recommendations for improvement, the Commission requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Commission's Policy on Distribution, Use, and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report.

A school's initial/continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. To monitor the school's progress in the Follow-Up Program, the Commission requires that the principal submit routine Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports documenting the current status of all evaluation report recommendations, with particular detail provided for any recommendation which may have been rejected or those items on which no action has been taken. In addition, responses must be detailed on all recommendations highlighted by the Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included on the next page. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

The Commission urges school officials to establish a formal follow-up program at once to review and implement all findings of the self-study and valid recommendations identified in the evaluation report. An outline of the Follow-Up Program is available in the Commission's Accreditation Handbook, which was given to the school at the onset of the self-study. Additional direction regarding suggested procedures and reporting requirements is provided at Follow-Up Seminars offered by Commission staff following the on-site visit.

The visiting committee would like to express thanks to the community for the hospitality and welcome. The school community completed an exemplary self-study that clearly identified the school's strengths and areas of need. The time and effort dedicated to the self-study and preparation for the visit ensured a successful accreditation visit.

# **SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY**

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## **NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES Commission on Public Secondary Schools**

Principals of member schools must report to the Commission within sixty (60) days of occurrence any substantive change in the school which has a negative impact on the school's ability to meet any of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of a substantive change must describe the change itself as well as detail the impact on the school's ability to meet the Standards. The following are potential areas where there might be negative substantive changes which must be reported:

- elimination of fine arts, practical arts, and student activities
- diminished upkeep and maintenance of facilities
- significantly decreased funding - cuts in the level of administrative and supervisory staffing
- cuts in the number of teachers and/or guidance counselors
- grade level responsibilities of the principal
- cuts in the number of support staff
- decreases in student services
- cuts in the educational media staffing
- increases in student enrollment that cannot be accommodated
- takeover by the state
- inordinate user fees
- changes in the student population that warrant program or staffing modification(s) that cannot be accommodated, e.g., the number of special needs students or vocational students or students with limited English proficiency

# Roster of Team Members

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## Chair(s)

**Chair: Mr. Francis Kennedy** - Berlin High School

**Assistant Chair: Ms. Sharon Cournoyer** - Windsor Locks High School

## Visiting Team Members

**Fiona Docherty** - Ridgefield High School

**Joanna Githens** - Torrington High School

**Elizabeth Hosmer** - Southington High School

**Tanya Kores** - Cheshire High School

**Stacy Loch** - Jonathan Law High School

**Anna Mahon** - Amity Regional Senior High School

**Ellen Maust** - New Haven Public Schools

**Dawn Poitras** - Waterford High School

**Julie Purcell** - Bacon Academy

**Richard Silva** - East Providence High School

**Frank Spring** - Wilby High School

**Renee Sylvestre** - Ledyard High School

**Bethany Wagner** - Plainfield High School

**John Washburn** - Glastonbury High School