

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**



**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

***REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE***

**Dartmouth High School  
Dartmouth, Massachusetts**

March 30 – April 2, 2014

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## **STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS**

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

The Committee on Public Secondary Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges considers this visiting committee report of Dartmouth High School to be a privileged document submitted by the Committee 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 Dartmouth High School in terms of the Committee'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.

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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 American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA), and the Commission on Public Schools (CPS) which is comprised of the Committee on Public Secondary Schools (CPSS), the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions (CTCI), and the Committee on Public Elementary and Middle Schools (CPEMS).

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 on Public Secondary Schools 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 Dartmouth High School, a committee of 10 members, 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 the superintendent, parents, students, and community members.

The self-study of Dartmouth High School extended over a period of 17 school months from August 2012 to December 2013. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, parents, and school board members joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations. Moreover, the report was well written and consistent in its frankness, thoroughness, and level of detail in each of the Standards which provided the visiting committee with appropriate evidence to support the school's findings of its strengths and needs.

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 core values, beliefs about learning, 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, Dartmouth 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 Dartmouth High School. The committee members spent four days in Dartmouth, Massachusetts; 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 teachers, building-level administrators, and central office administrators from public schools in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Dartmouth High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 56 hours shadowing 16 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 parenthesis in the Standards sections of the report. 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 Dartmouth High School.

## SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUMMARY

### THE SCHOOL

Dartmouth High School, located in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, is a four-year comprehensive high school accredited by the NEASC and approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Town of Dartmouth is a suburban coastal community located in southeastern Massachusetts. Bordered by the historic whaling community, New Bedford, to the east; Fall River to the north; and Westport to the west, Dartmouth is approximately 60 miles south of Boston and 30 miles east of Providence, Rhode Island. In land area, Dartmouth is the third largest town in the Commonwealth.

Dartmouth has a population of 34,032. The racial makeup of the town is 90.8% Caucasian, 1.1% African American, 0.2% Native American, 1.2% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander, 5.1% from other races, and 1.6% from two or more races. English is the primary language spoken by the vast majority of students at Dartmouth High School, but many families also speak Portuguese in the home. The median family income is \$62,306.

As of July 2013, the unemployment rate in Dartmouth is 8.6%. The number of families living below the poverty level is 21%. The largest employers of the town are Bristol County Field Services Division, Bristol County Sheriff's Office, Hawthorne Medical Associates, Home Depot, and Shaw's Supermarkets. Dartmouth is also the home of the University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth, which employs fewer than 100 residents. Dartmouth has experienced steady and considerable growth since the 1950s, when the population of the town was 11,115.

In addition to Dartmouth High School, Dartmouth Public Schools has one middle school and four elementary schools. Dartmouth Middle School serves 989 students and the total population of the elementary schools is 1,682 students. The total enrollment of Dartmouth Public Schools is 3,783 students. Other schools serving the community include Dartmouth Early Learning Center, Bishop Stang High School, Friends Academy, The Montessori School in Westport, Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School in New Bedford, and Bristol County Agricultural High School in Dighton.

The FY2012 per pupil expenditure in Dartmouth was \$11,220 compared to a state average expenditure of \$13,636. The FY2011 per pupil expenditure was \$10,838 compared to a state average of \$13,361. Town of Dartmouth FY2014 net operating revenues (local resources) are \$73,740,979. Forty-nine percent of the local resources is allocated toward education, as well as 71% of local taxation dollars.

Dartmouth High School includes students in grades 9-12 with a total enrollment of 1,122. The racial, ethnic, and cultural composition of the school has remained steady with 2.1% African American, 3.2% Asian, 1.7% Hispanic, Native Hawaiian 0.1%, Multi-race Non-Hispanic 1.9, and 91% White. The adjusted dropout rates in 2011 and 2012 were 1.8% and 2.8%, respectively. The average daily student attendance is 96.4, and the average attendance rate among teachers is 96%.

There are 81 teachers at Dartmouth High School, creating a ratio of 14:1. The individual teacher load varies by content area and the average class size varies by section, with very few classes exceeding twenty-five students.

All freshmen are required to take Freshman Seminar in addition to their courses in English, mathematics, social studies, science, and world languages. All introductory world languages courses are non-leveled. Students in grades ten through twelve may select curriculum classes from three levels of college preparatory, honors, and Advanced Placement (when offered). Dartmouth High School offers fifteen Advanced Placement courses, with some on a rotating basis. Within the graduation requirements, sixty-five percent of students are enrolled in college preparatory courses and thirty-five percent are enrolled in honors courses. Twenty-eight percent of students are enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, some of which fulfill graduation requirements. Ten percent of the students receive special education services. All students must earn twenty-eight credits to graduate; this includes one credit in Freshman Seminar, one credit in the unified arts, two credits in physical education, and one-half credit in Health Decisions. Students in the classes of 2014 and 2015 must earn four credits in English, three credits in mathematics, three credits in social studies, and three credits in science and technology. With the adoption of the Massachusetts Common Core State Standards, students in the classes of 2016 and 2017 must earn four credits in English, four credits in mathematics, three credits in a lab-based science, three credits in history/social science, two credits in the same world language, and five credits of additional core courses.

Among the class of 2012, sixty-eight percent of students enrolled in four-year colleges, twenty-two percent enrolled in two-year colleges, one percent in other post-secondary education, three percent enlisted in the military, three percent entered the workforce, and three percent had no known plans. Many graduates choose to attend either University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth or Bristol Community College. Several post-graduate training programs for skilled trades are available at Bristol Community College, Diman Regional Vocational Technical High School, MotoRing Technical Training Institute (MTTI), Rob Roy Academy, and the Salter School.

Dartmouth High School has several well-established partnerships in the local community. Students are able to take college courses at no cost to them through the dual enrollment programs at University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth and Bristol Community College. Through a partnership with Bristol Community College, seniors are able to elect an internship for credit in their chosen career field. The Dartmouth Education Foundation awards grants to educators for curriculum development, professional development opportunities, faculty-mentored student projects, and other educational pursuits. Dartmouth High School also participates in Reality Day, a financial literacy program for juniors sponsored by area businesses, financial institutions, and institutions of higher learning. After Prom is an annual event made possible through fundraising efforts and partnerships with the local business community. This fun-filled evening provides safety for students and peace of mind for parents/guardians.

Students are recognized for their civic accomplishments through the Principal's Service Award, which is given to four students each month in recognition of their service to the school or local community. Seniors and select juniors are recognized for their academic accomplishments each spring at Senior Awards and Scholarship Night. Students are also

recognized for their individual pursuits through the Brown Bag Lunch Series. This forum provides students an opportunity to share with faculty their academic experiences beyond the classroom. Recent topics include independent biology research at University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth, an art exhibit, and an independent internship at a financial planning firm.

The administrative team, faculty, and staff work together to promote an atmosphere of excellence and values. Dedicated staff members work together to educate each student in a safe, caring, and challenging environment that supports creativity and diversity, welcomes community, encourages lifelong learning and service, and values the potential of each individual.

# DARTMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL



## CORE VALUES AND BELIEFS

*The Dartmouth High School Community, fueled by respect for self, others, and the educational process, values and believes in:*

- *The provision of a safe and equitable environment that fosters self-empowerment and the academic growth of all learners*
- *The delivery of curriculum, instruction and assessment that makes Twenty-First Century learning accessible for all*
- *The commitment to offering an array of rigorous courses and to partnering with the community to promote self-discovery, global citizenship, critical thinking, and innovative problem-solving*
- *The responsibility of its members to identify and address the needs of the school, and local and global communities*
- *The ability to share opinions openly and respectfully*

## LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

### *Academic Competencies*

All students must:

- Define their academic goals, and develop and monitor a plan to achieve them
- Interpret and evaluate a variety of auditory, written, visual, and non-verbal media
- Communicate thoughts, ideas, information, and understandings through a variety of modalities (written, auditory, visual and second language)
- Identify, analyze, and solve conventional and unpredictable problems by using critical thinking, modeling, data analysis, innovative approaches and digital technologies

### *Social Competencies*

All students must be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Make healthy lifestyle decisions
- Work collaboratively with and demonstrate respect for others

### *Civic Competency*

- All students must be able to demonstrate that they have provided service to the community

# 1

## Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

*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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning.
2. The school has challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement.
3. The school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities.

## CONCLUSIONS

The school community engages in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. The school community is making a significant effort to increase the amount of time and resources allocated to a collaborative and collegial process of analyzing researched-based best practices to improve values, beliefs, and expectations, ensuring that the school develops a rigorous, standardized, and formal academic program. Students, parents, and faculty and staff have participated in the analysis and development of the school's core values and beliefs since January 2009. Multiple iterations of committee meetings and surveys were conducted to ensure a broad collection of data and to include all community stakeholders. In addition to professional development, high quality resources in the field of contemporary education have informed the analysis and development of the core values, beliefs, and expectations. Examples include the school's work in curriculum writing and the development of common assessments based on Power Standards; Grant Wiggins's *Understanding by Design*; The Center from Secondary School Re-Design's *Gold Seal Lessons*; Kathy Porcaro's *Differentiation in the Classroom*; and Katana Conley's *Literacy Strategies*. After a four-year process, a committee was formed to create a refined set of core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. In January 2012, the core values, beliefs, and expectations were presented to the faculty who voted to approve them. However, despite significant time, work, resources, and a considerable number of participants, there is little evidence of a formal standardized school-wide commitment to the values, beliefs, and expectations manifesting themselves in a clearly articulated curriculum, standardized system of school-wide assessments and rubrics, and a data collection and feedback loop to track student progress across all subjects and grades. As a result of the school's collaborative and inclusive process to establish core values and beliefs, and when the school commits to these values and beliefs by developing an articulated curriculum and school-wide rubrics and assessments, it will ensure optimal, high level student achievement that reflects the school's beliefs about learning. (school committee, teachers, administrators, students, self-study, district improvement plan, Endicott survey, classroom observations, student work)

The school has challenging and measurable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify targeted high levels of achievement. However, these expectations are not yet uniformly tracked in every subject and in every grade to monitor the progress of students' achievement of the school's core values, beliefs, and academic expectations throughout the school year. The Dartmouth High School core values, beliefs, and expectations posters are located throughout the school, including every classroom. The posters clearly outline the core values and beliefs. Community members were able to identify and describe a number of aspects of the core values, beliefs, and expectations. Twenty-first century learning expectations are described in various school-wide rubrics; the quality of rubrics varies greatly. It is unclear when or how teachers are given feedback on the implementation of or attainment of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and the rubrics by which to measure them. Faculty and administration meet formally and informally to analyze student results on end-of-year assessments and to share student work in relation to the learning expectations in most subjects. Among faculty and staff there is a strong belief in school-wide rubrics, school-wide standardization, and a process to further refine rubrics to identify and track high levels of achievement. There is a consistent commitment to improve instruction through the acquisition

of student performance data about areas in which students need to improve. Nevertheless, until the implementation of a formal system for tracking the academic, social and civic competencies for all students, the school's ability to assist students in achieving the learning expectations will not be fully realized. (school committee, teachers, administrators, students, self-study, district improvement plan, Endicott survey, classroom observations, student work)

The school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom; however, there is little evidence that values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are established in a formal or standardized way. The Statement of Core Values and Beliefs, recently adopted in 2012, manifests itself in the day-to-day life of Dartmouth High School including students respecting each other and adults and students working together in groups. Although a handful of individual classrooms were observed in which teachers struggled with classroom management, the overall school atmosphere is friendly, teachers are helpful and foster positive learning environments, and students are eager to stay after school for academic help and participate in extensive award-winning co-curricular activities and electives. School pride is palpable and strong; it is clear that many students are engaged in the learning process, especially in the honors and AP level. Although the core values and beliefs are reflected in the day-to-day culture of the school, they informally drive the development or maintenance of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and policies. There is no formal system of implementation or tracking the core values and beliefs. It is unclear to what extent the core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations drive the school-wide systems or programs enabling the high school to function as a contiguous program working toward uniformly understood goals. Instead of a unified and clearly articulated school-wide plan or program, individual teacher choice – primarily divided by department – is the driving force for decision-making for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. There is no standardized school-wide list of outcomes to formally measure the presence of core values and beliefs, track their growth, or ensure uniform implementation for all students in the school. It is unclear how the school is implementing aspects of the Dartmouth District Improvement Plan, adopted by the school committee in March 2012, which includes refinement of curriculum based on clearly articulated rigorous academic goals and expectations. There is no evidence of a formal link between values, beliefs, and expectations and the present district teacher evaluation protocol, as the school has not yet implemented the mandated Massachusetts model system for educator evaluation. There is no formal way for administrators to track implementation of standards by teachers or to give teachers formal feedback on their performance to improve their teaching strategies to raise student performance. Strategically embedding the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations in all curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices, and making them the driving force of all policy, procedures, and decision-making will enhance best practice instruction and learning. (school committee, teachers, administrators, students, self-study, district improvement plan, Endicott survey, classroom observations, student work)

The school reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities. While the school accesses research and has brought in outside experts to support this process, it still lacks a formal system that includes all stakeholders in consistently reviewing and revising the values, beliefs, and learning expectations. Moreover, the methods and indicators to support the tracking, review, and revision of values and expectations are not fully established or consistently implemented. When a formal process is established,

articulated, and implemented for the review and revision of the core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, the school will be able to fully realize the tenets of its published Statement of Core Values and Beliefs. (school committee, teachers, students, self-study, district improvement plan, Endicott survey, administrators, classroom observations, student work)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The development of a set of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations through an extensive process that involved all stakeholders
2. The development and maintenance of a positive school culture representing the established set of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
3. A strong dedication to student learning, attaining high standards, and improving achievement
4. The school culture that supports students, develops strong connections, and affords extra help through a teacher open-door policy
5. The fostering of tangible school pride for a significant number of students

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Develop and implement a strategy to ensure that all aspects of the Dartmouth High School Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations are known by all stakeholders
2. Publish and maintain the school-wide rubrics in such a way that it enables all stakeholders access, including students at the start of each course, to understand and track how the school is assessing and making progress toward attaining its 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Develop an efficient and timely process to regularly review the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities
4. Examine student performance and growth data to inform the review and revision of the Dartmouth High School 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations

# 2

## Curriculum

*The written and taught curriculum is designed to result in all students achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century expectations for student learning. The written curriculum is the framework within which a school aligns and personalizes the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
  - instructional strategies
  - assessment practices that include the use of 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.

## CONCLUSIONS

The school's development of a curriculum that is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations is not complete, but is ongoing. Teachers strive to provide engaging lessons and a variety of learning experiences, and many of them post the core values and beliefs and learning expectations in their classrooms. Parents state that the learning expectations are a reflection of the school's core values, and they believe that their children are receiving a rigorous and challenging education at Dartmouth High School. The Endicott survey reveals that 48 percent of teachers and 86 percent of parents believe the school's formal curriculum design ensures that all students practice and achieve all of the school's learning expectations. The professional staff is engaged in revision work in order to ensure that content, skills, and strategies will afford all students the opportunity to practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. While the school does have several curriculum maps and some unit plans, these documents do not clearly reflect the school's stated academic learning expectations, and it is not evident that the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations are the driving force behind the curriculum, as it exists today, in each content area. Teachers indicate that each department is "in a different place" and that curriculum revision and alignment to new standards and learning expectations is ongoing. Curriculum work has been addressed mainly in terms of formatting (e.g., curriculum map set-up and organization, inclusion of key components in curriculum mapping and/or unit plans, such as essential questions or aligned standards, etc.). There is clear evidence that all departments have worked to incorporate writing across the curriculum. For example, mathematics assessments include a problem-solving question with a writing component, and extensive research papers are present in core courses such as biology and history, in addition to the English classes. Literacy is also a focus across all curriculum areas as evidenced by close reading exercises in content areas, such as the Document Based Questions (DBQs) in history classes and the analysis of written text in AP Literature and US History classes. An examination of student work reveals a strong teacher commitment to provide students with challenging and rigorous assignments supporting the learning expectations. Although school-wide rubrics for communication and problem-solving have been created, they are seldom used to evaluate student work. Most teachers use departmental rubrics or assignment-specific rubrics. Nevertheless, the professional staff is working on modifying the format and content of school-wide rubrics to ensure that they are applicable and easy to use in all content areas. When the completed curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, the school will be able to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, curriculum documents, curriculum subcommittee members, Endicott survey, teachers, students)

Dartmouth High School's curriculum is not written in a common format. Although the Endicott survey reports that 56 percent of the professional staff believes there is a common, formal curriculum template that is used by all subject areas, it appears that this common template applies only to the curriculum maps. The school's curriculum binders and online curriculum folders in the Aspen system confirm that the maps are generally written in a common format with features that include essential questions, concepts, content, skills, and some alignment to standards. A few courses feature written units of study, but this is not present across all subjects or in all courses within subjects. Where units of study are included in the written curriculum, instructional strategies and assessment practices are listed; however,

some courses, especially those referred to as “singletons,” i.e., a single section of a course taught by one educator, have a syllabus or outline that deviates from the curriculum map format. Although no rubrics are present in the written curriculum, teachers and lead teachers/instructional coaches report that most teachers are using course-specific rubrics to assess student learning. These course-specific rubrics are posted in some classes and are present with some student work samples. The professional staff is currently in the process of modifying the school-wide rubrics that they piloted last year. Lead teachers/instructional coaches in each content area are exploring the changes needed to ensure that the rubrics are both applicable to their content areas and reflective of the school’s academic expectations for learning. Teachers and students agree, however, that in many courses, common assessments have been designed and implemented to measure all students equally. The current curriculum documents do not provide evidence that the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations guide the development of the curriculum. When the curriculum documents have been fully revised and completed, students will have equitable opportunities to practice and achieve the academic expectations. (self-study, curriculum documents, curriculum subcommittee members, Endicott survey, teachers, students, classroom observations)

The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge for many students. Inquiry and problem-solving are apparent in most course areas (e.g., higher order thinking and problem-solving are consistently demonstrated in AP, honors, and laboratory courses). According to the Endicott survey, 80 percent of the students believe that the content of their courses is challenging and requires them to think critically and solve problems. Instructional strategies, as listed on the curriculum maps and unit plans, include student group work and assignments which require students to collaborate. In science and engineering classes, students complete lab activities and utilize the scientific method and an engineering design process to solve complex problems and to reach conclusions. Cross-disciplinary learning occurs in rare instances, such as when students read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and examine the pre-Civil Rights treatment of African Americans. Clear connections, if embedded in the content, remain at the discretion of individual classroom teachers to make these connections for students without formal collaboration with colleagues from other departments. It is noteworthy that the Freshman Seminar course provides opportunities for students to learn and practice skills that are applicable to all content areas. For example, students are taught computer skills, test-taking strategies, and effective use of the resources in the library media center during this semester course. The Endicott survey reports 44 percent of staff feels the curriculum emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning, and the self-study indicates that teachers have the desire to provide students with more opportunities for cross-curricular activities; however, because common planning time is not available for this purpose, this desire remains unrealized. The Endicott survey reports that only 51 percent of students believe that teachers explain how to apply classroom learning to life outside of school; however, authentic learning opportunities exist in some departments. For example, in the business department, students run the school store and complete an analysis and business plan that is recognized through the Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), from whom they have received gold medal honors. The early childhood certificate practicum provides the opportunity for students to plan, write, and instruct a unit of learning to kindergarten students in the district. Last semester, 70 students participated in a business internship program administered and monitored by the guidance department. As part of this program, students spend one block per day working in an area business where they are provided the opportunity to apply skills learned in the classroom. When the curriculum provides equal opportunities for students in all

classes, including inclusion and college prep classes, to practice cross disciplinary and authentic learning opportunities, higher order thinking, and problem-solving skills, the school will be able to pervasively assert the depth of understanding and application that currently exists in some parts of the school program. (self-study, curriculum documents, curriculum subcommittee members, Endicott survey, teachers, students, classroom observations)

There is not clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. The written curriculum includes curriculum maps or course syllabi for most subjects across the curriculum, but many do not have written units. The taught curriculum is aligned with the curriculum map or syllabus for only some courses. In AP English Literature and Composition, the students work in groups to read and analyze poems for structure and tone, which is clearly delineated as “item seven, Contemporary Poets,” on the course syllabus; in AP US History, students analyze political cartoons and read and analyze Bryan’s Cross of Gold speech as outlined in “Unit 10: Populism and Progressivism.” Efforts have been made to align content and instruction. Several departments have collaborated to develop common assessments for end-of-unit and/or end-of-course summative evaluations. Despite limited PLC time, teachers have agreed upon specific content in core classes; for example, all students in Freshman English read and study the same core texts, and all algebra and geometry courses have been aligned for both content and assessment. When the alignment between what is written and what is taught becomes more formal and deliberate, teachers will be able to measure more effectively and to deliver the written curriculum with fidelity and will ensure the level of equity and consistency reflected in the core values and beliefs about learning. (self-study, curriculum documents, curriculum subcommittee members, teachers, administrators, classroom observations)

Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exists between and among some academic areas. A vertical team established last year addresses K through 12 mathematics. The team met four times this year to review data from the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and STAR assessments in order to pinpoint weaknesses and to make adjustments in the curriculum. An engineering team is also in place which has reviewed and aligned the curriculum to avoid overlap in content and projects across the K through 12 classes. The lead teacher for the unified arts program in the high school is responsible for overseeing the unified arts program K through 12, and is integral to the vertical articulation process. She has advised the writing of the curriculum maps for all grades and conducts professional development programs across the grade levels. The athletic director and the music director also oversee their respective programs. This coordination helps to ensure that students at all levels are supported in their academic goals from K through 12; however, teachers and administrators report that efforts to articulate across all grade levels has been “disjointed” in many areas, especially with regard to the high school core content subjects outside of math or those without a K through 12 director, such as physical education. Moreover, there is a low incidence of curricular coordination between and among departments within the school. When the school ensures clear communication and articulation across all grades and myriad departments, it will prevent gaps and overlap in curricula, allowing successful attainment of the school’s 21<sup>st</sup> century academic expectations. (self-study, curriculum documents, curriculum subcommittee members, Endicott survey, teachers, students, classroom observations, administrators)

There are sufficient staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, and equipment and supplies at Dartmouth High School to fully implement the curriculum. Teachers are each

provided with a laptop computer in their classrooms, and additional technological devices, such as SMART Boards or Elmo projectors, are utilized in many classrooms. Textbooks and supplemental texts are available and assigned to students. The library media center is staffed with a library media specialist and a library assistant. These personnel provide support to students and faculty, both in the library media center and in the classrooms (e.g., when an English teacher is beginning a research project, he or she may collaborate with the library media specialist to gather online and print-based materials to support the research). Electronic databases are available in the library media center, as well as being accessible via the school website so students can access them from home. The library media specialist is available to co-teach lessons in the classroom. She maintains a blog called *Ask a Librarian*, and she provides instruction on the use of presentation software. The library media center is open for extended hours in order to make this resource available to students and staff. The professional and curricular resources available in the library media center support the curriculum. The building also contains five additional computer labs which are available for class use, as well as three mobile laptop carts which can be signed out to teachers and used in the classroom. Although there have been wireless connectivity problems in the school this year, the school is addressing the problem and plans to upgrade the wireless network this summer. Additionally, the student-to-teacher ratio is 14 to 1, as reported in the self-study, which is sufficient to staff core required classes, while still offering an array of diverse electives and a high number of rigorous classes. The program of studies is extensive, including a regularly expanding number of AP classes (e.g., the number of sections of AP US History has doubled in the last year). Both staff and facility resources are sufficient to support the students in meeting the expectations for learning. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, students, classroom observations, school committee)

The district provides the school's professional staff with adequate personnel and financial resources, but only affords limited time for peer collaboration on the development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum. Staffing levels are sufficient to implement the curriculum, allowing the school to offer a variety of rigorous course offerings. MCAS data is used to inform instruction in literacy, writing, and math, and the recent implementation of the STAR assessment tool is expected to be a "curriculum lens," aiding in the process of revising and aligning the curriculum. PLCs have been implemented on a limited basis. For the first semester of this year, the staff was provided time during the school day, on a voluntary basis, to work on evaluating and revising curriculum. Because this time was on a volunteer basis, not all staff took part in the process. In addition to this PLC time, the professional staff is scheduled to meet monthly after school in PLCs, and additional professional development time is provided on early release days. The professional staff is currently modifying curriculum to include a "workshop" model for teaching and learning across the curriculum. They are also using end-of-course assessments (final exams) and the "backward design process" to revise curriculum; however, there is little time allotted for this process. The school has also made the financial commitment to provide \$1,000 per faculty member which could be used for individual professional development activities related to curriculum work. The district provides the school's professional staff with adequate personnel and financial resources to continue ongoing development, evaluation and revision of the curriculum, but there remains a need for dedicated time for personnel to embark on a collaborative effort to complete the written curriculum beyond what is documented in the curriculum maps and course syllabi, as well as for time to review and use data from assessment results to inform further curriculum development. When this time is formally and consistently allocated, the school will enhance its ability to ensure that

all curricula are complete, articulated, and current. (self-study, curriculum documents, curriculum subcommittee members, teachers, students, classroom observations, administrators)

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The efforts on the part of teachers and teacher leaders to create consistency in content and assessment for core classes across the curriculum
2. The existence of diverse elective course offerings
3. The high level of inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills, especially in honors and AP classes
4. The increased awareness of the importance of literacy skills and writing across all content areas and the efforts to incorporate both into all content curriculum
5. The opportunities for internships and off-campus educational experiences
6. The introduction of Professional Learning Communities

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Establish a formal, comprehensive, written curriculum for all content areas which is driven by and clearly supports the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Formalize the process and protocols which will ensure that the written curriculum and the taught curriculum are identical
3. Form vertical articulation teams where none currently exist, and implement a defined process for the teams to communicate with all content areas K through 12 to ensure seamless coverage of key content and skills throughout the grade levels and across departments
4. Afford additional formal time for teachers to collaborate on the development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum

**3**

**Instruction**

*The quality of instruction is the single most important factor in students' achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## CONCLUSIONS

Teachers' instructional practices are sometimes examined to improve future instruction; however, the examination of instructional practices is rarely focused on ensuring consistencies with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Some teachers actively and deliberately reflect on their instructional practices. For example, a reflective geometry teacher was able to differentiate the same class activity in her three sections, depending on her respective students' individual learning needs. Moreover, there have been instances in which the staff has made a concerted effort to reflect on their practice and implement strategies to improve student performance. Teachers have spent a substantial amount of time analyzing students' open response essays, and found that some students were not meeting expectations in close reading and organizing evidence to craft a coherent response to a question prompt. As a result, instructional practices were changed to include more use of guided practice, graphic organizers, and close reading activities. The general consensus among members of the school leadership team is that student performance in attacking open response questions has improved. However, from conversations and observations, teachers have not yet fully implemented the school-wide rubrics and aligned instruction to the school's values, beliefs, and learning expectations. According to the Endicott survey, 56 percent of teachers examine their practice to make sure that instruction is aligned with the school's core values and beliefs (e.g., a math teacher acknowledges using a department-wide rubric which is not derived from the school-wide rubrics, but is used by the math department). This practice also occurs in the science and history departments. Members of the leadership team acknowledge issues around common grading practices among similar courses: Not all departments are using common rubrics, and those rubrics that are used may or may not be aligned to the school's goals. When a unified attempt is made by all faculty members to actively reflect on their current instructional methods, and to change them according to the needs of their students, all students will be able to access and demonstrate mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, as stated in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, administrators, teachers, parents, students, student work, classroom observations)

Teachers' instructional practices often support the achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Teachers across all disciplines make concerted efforts to personalize instruction and differentiate the learning activities in their classrooms, even though only 31.6 percent of students claim that teachers personalize instruction. An English 9 class features a learning stations activity that includes cooperative group work, higher order thinking tasks, (e.g., identifying the mood in a piece from Shakespeare and using a SMART Board to integrate technology). While students work in their groups, the teacher apportions ample time with each individual group, demonstrating a commitment to personalized and individualized attention in the context of the larger class. In an academic support classroom, students on individualized education plans (IEPs) hone their mathematics skills in an environment where individualized attention is the norm. Teachers make an effort to emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking, while engaging students as active and self-directed learners, allowing them to apply their knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. This is found in an English class where the teacher has students engage in an active learning group activity about the relationship between the life of an author, her book, *A Raisin in the Sun*, and current events. After reading a biographical excerpt, students are asked to identify aspects of the author's life that led to the writing of the author's book and then to create and construct an argument as to how the author would react to current issues, such as gay rights and equality for all. A

geometry teacher created a unit on geometric transformations that includes a pre-reading exercise, a paired reading exercise, a kinesthetic exercise, and a hands-on project using the concepts to create patterns of tessellations of geometric shapes. This unit allows students to engage in higher order thinking and problem-solving skills. Some of the other academic departments assign similar complex assignments to students at all ability levels. Teachers in the social studies department assign the same research paper to both their honors and college prep students, but provide scaffolding and detailed steps for the latter. District administrators have indicated that most differentiation occurs in co-taught classrooms. Furthermore, school and district administrators indicate that each teacher is provided with \$1,000.00 per school year to participate in training to gain expertise in content and pedagogy. What is not evident is how students engage in cross-disciplinary learning. According to the self-study, teachers sometimes engage students in self-assessment and reflection. Many teachers offer students the opportunity to correct work, retake tests and quizzes, and/or make improvements on projects and writing assignments. Currently, individual teachers use their own rubrics, logs, and journals as a means for students to self-assess; however, the school is still in the process of implementing school-wide rubrics. Students are expected to use technology, both in and outside of the classroom, where a majority of students, 68.8 percent, are asked to use technology in the classroom; however, according to the self-study, there is a concern about the use of technology to support instruction and student learning, and it is identified as a need. The director of educational technology has indicated that, while the "foundation" for the school's IT system is solid, the available wiring and software capabilities do not provide adequate wireless access for all students and classrooms. Some classrooms do not have Internet connectivity, while other classrooms are equipped with a fully functioning SMART Board, desktop computer, and digital projector. Efforts are being made to update and upgrade the current system and introduce the use of e-learning software such as NovaNet®, and Rosetta Stone®. While many teachers actively engage students in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning, this is not consistent across the school. Once this practice is ubiquitous, the school will be able to ensure that all students, regardless of ability level, are afforded these educational opportunities. (Endicott survey, self-study, administrators, teachers, parents, students, student work, classroom observations)

Teachers occasionally adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student. While there are some who employ formative assessment, it is not being used on a consistent basis to inform and differentiate class instruction. An example of its use includes a chemistry class in which the teacher used a formative assessment to gauge how much information the students had retained from the prior week. The teacher noted that he was using a formative assessment approach because of his own absence the previous week, while one of his students noted that formative assessments are not regularly used in that class. Only 59.5 percent of teachers believe that the staff uses differentiated instructional practices. There are members of the teaching staff who consistently use formative assessment practices in their daily instruction. In those classes, teachers use strategies such as "dip-sticking" to check for student understanding, cold-calling on students by randomly selecting names out of a bag, "do now" activities, and exit tickets. During a grade 9 and 10 academic support sessions, the teacher reads and provides immediate constructive feedback on individual student journal entries. Depending on the student, the academic support teacher asks probing questions to challenge the student to think more clearly about what he or she had written. A math teacher stated that she purposely places her students into small groups of four, designed to consist of students with different ability and achievement levels. Teachers often use group-learning techniques to meet the diverse needs of their students, providing additional support and

alternative strategies to increase understanding and to enhance the learning of each student within the classroom. This is reaffirmed by 85.4 percent of students, who claim that teachers use group activities in their classes. However, school administrators have noted there is no current policy in regard to staff giving timely and targeted feedback to students and their families. When all teachers regularly adjust instructional practices based on formative assessments and provide scaffolding, differentiation, and other supports consistently, the school will be able to more effectively meet the needs of individual students and will ensure that each student has the opportunity to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, administrators, teachers, parents, students, student work, classroom observations)

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, strive to improve their instructional practices by examining evidence, such as student achievement data and student work. Classroom observations and interviews reveal that the majority of teachers improve their instructional practices by utilizing various sources of data, although only 57.1 percent confirms their use of this practice through Endicott survey responses. Examples of data analyzed include formal and informal student feedback, emails from parents, examining samples of student work, conducting item analyses of common assessments such as final exams, and district-led analyses of MCAS and Star Assessment data. School administrators emphasize that with the recent restructuring of the high school administration, they are now able to utilize their weekly case management meetings to make informed decisions about services provided to individual students. The special education staff uses the Read Naturally® model tests to determine appropriate educational placements for its students. Some teachers have participated in ELL Category 1 training, and the school uses World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), Accessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELL) or other testing models to determine the appropriate placement for ELL students. There has been some attempt at utilizing pre- and post-test data to drive instruction, but these efforts are not widespread among the entire faculty. By continuing to increase their efforts to utilize data to drive instruction, teachers will be able to improve instruction effectively and to ensure opportunities for all students to achieve mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, administrators, teachers, parents, students, student work, classroom observations)

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, and they maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices, as reported by 82.9 percent of students and 84.5 percent of staff, respectively. District and school administrators support the efforts of teachers to maintain expertise in content and pedagogy by providing a yearly professional development stipend for all teachers. One teacher stated that she plans to attend a biology conference and subscribes to several educational publications each year. Many teachers take advantage of this opportunity, as evidenced by the vast number of reimbursement requests. An engineering teacher described, in detail, efforts to revamp the science, technology, and engineering curriculum to include architectural design classes. New instructional software was made possible by adopting materials from Tufts University. There also seems to be a focus on content and pedagogy, indicated by the school's recent hiring of a literacy coach. Teachers stated that the literacy coach has conducted different professional development sessions on how to successfully implement various instructional strategies for teaching writing. Use of the Role of the Writer, Audience, Format, and Topic (RAFT) writing model is evident in samples of student work. Teachers also reported that the school has spent considerable time training

teachers in using the *Understanding by Design (UbD)* model to write purposeful curriculum units; however, district-wide professional development does not provide teaching staff with the appropriate opportunities for improving content-specific instruction. Teachers indicate that while they truly appreciate district-wide professional development and opportunities for some voluntary participation in professional learning communities (PLCs), the agenda and focus of the sessions were dictated, inflexible, and did not provide enough autonomy to the different academic departments. Some departments have made great strides in improving content and pedagogy, while other departments have just begun their efforts. By staying current in content and pedagogy school-wide, teachers will be able to improve the quality of instruction so that all students will be able to demonstrate mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. (Endicott survey, self-study, administrators, teachers, parents, students, student work, classroom observations)

## COMMENDATIONS

1. The efforts of various teachers to personalize and differentiate instruction
2. The instructional practices that were changed to include more use of guided practice, graphic organizers, and close reading activities as a result of teacher analysis of students' open response essays
3. The integration of the use of course-specific rubrics in some classrooms as part of the renewed emphasis by teachers on strategies that encourage student self-assessment and self-reflection
4. The one thousand dollars per school year that is available to each teacher for training in content and pedagogy
5. The commitment of instructional practices that integrate the use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning, despite the issues related to wireless connectivity
6. The purposeful use of group learning activities by some teachers
7. The efforts to provide academic support to students who are struggling in various content areas such as math, science, and English language arts

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure that all teachers regularly evaluate their instructional practices based on the newly developed core values and beliefs about learning
2. Increase collaboration across the content areas so that all teachers make regular connections with other content areas in order to make learning more meaningful to students
3. Ensure that every teacher has and employs strategies to fully engage students as active and self-directed learners and asks students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
4. Provide more regular opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment and reflection
5. Use student performance data from the school-wide rubrics to improve instruction

**4**

## Assessment of and for Student Learning

*Assessment informs students and stakeholders of progress and growth toward meeting the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
2. The school's professional staff communicates:
  - individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families
  - the school's progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed.
5. Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics.
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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although the professional staff has developed school-wide rubrics, only 36.9 percent understands or employs a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. School-wide rubrics are seldom used (10.7 percent as reported in the Endicott survey) to inform instruction and connect to core values. The school-wide rubrics are designed to reflect the school's academic competencies as identified in the Statement of Core Values and Beliefs about Learning. The civic and social competencies, which are also part of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, are not assessed through a formally implemented school-wide analytic rubric. However, the guidance department uses the civic and social competencies in developing students' long-term goals. Teachers expressed that the school-wide rubrics are not easily adaptable to their disciplines. Student work samples indicate that teachers across all disciplines develop and utilize their own assignment-based rubrics to assess learning. School-wide rubrics are sporadically used in order to assess core values. When the professional staff establishes a formal process to fully employ the use of school-wide rubrics, the school will be able to assess both individual and whole-school progress in achieving its 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (teachers, administrators, school committee, Endicott survey, self-study, student work)

The school's professional staff communicates some individual student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and their families, and 61 percent of parents feel that student progress is sometimes communicated. Although 82.1 percent of staff uses a variety of formative and summative assessments, only 10.7 percent uses the school-wide analytic rubrics, when assessing student-learning expectations. Teachers state that learning expectations are embedded into content-specific rubrics, and they have attempted to integrate the rubrics, but feel that they need further revision in order to be effective. There are mixed perceptions concerning the school's communication of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations; 61.7 percent of students, 63.1 percent of parents and 36.9 percent of teachers believe that this communication occurs, albeit through course grades. The district has begun implementing the Aspen<sup>®</sup> instructional management system for the 2013-14 school year and plans to provide independent access to all parents regarding student progress. There is some communication of individual progress and achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations; however, this communication seldom goes beyond a letter grade. Communication does not explicitly detail to parents and students whether or not the student has met or is making progress toward the school's targeted level of achievement based on the use of school-wide analytical rubrics. Once the professional staff clearly and consistently communicates student progress in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students and families, they will be able to fully assist students in achieving the expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, administrators, parents, teachers)

The professional staff (53.6 percent) sometimes collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data from both formative and summative assessments to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement; however, progress with implementing the school-wide analytical rubrics is limited. Teachers report that they take steps to resolve inequities through the redesign of common assessments given during mid-year and final exams. Although 81 percent of teachers report that they collectively review and discuss summative and standardized assessment results, only 27.4 percent feels that they have the time to be involved in formal curriculum review and revision. Although the self-study indicates that each department uses bi-weekly

PLC common planning time to review student work and to adjust instruction, teachers report they do not have sufficient time to discuss student progress; nevertheless, some professional staff members collect and analyze data. With more time formally dedicated to this process, teachers will be able to analyze data comprehensively and to make adjustments to inequities in student achievement. (Endicott survey, teachers, self-study, administrators)

Prior to each unit of study, some teachers communicate the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations to students; however, most teachers communicate them informally through class discussion and instruction. Only 36.9 percent of teachers feel that they communicate 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations prior to units of study. Content-specific goals are often identified more explicitly through course-level rubrics, as used in social studies, English, physical education, unified arts, and world languages. Teachers found it difficult to integrate the school-wide rubrics with their content-specific assessments. Some teachers communicate to students the school's applicable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, while the majority address them informally and focus on course-specific rubrics. When the school develops explicit connections to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations, teachers and students will be able to accurately gauge progress toward achieving these expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, teachers, student work)

Prior to summative assessments, teachers often provide students with corresponding course-specific rubrics and checklists. The majority of students indicate that they understand in advance the content to be assessed and 70.5 percent agrees that teachers use course-specific rubrics to assess their work. Most teachers provide course-specific rubrics and exemplars for students prior to practice in order to communicate expectations. Providing students with course-specific rubrics and checklists and course-specific rubrics prior to summative assessments is a pervasive school-wide practice, therefore preparing students to meet lesson objectives. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, teachers, student work)

In each unit of study, most teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, as 82 percent of staff reports that they use a variety of assessment strategies in their classrooms, including Socratic seminars, mock test practice, peer review, exit tickets, questioning, debates, sketches, checklists, focused close reading assignments, and discussion. Teachers use exemplars and provide students with opportunities to revise their work based upon written and verbal feedback. Examples of summative assessments include final projects, essays, presentations, and exams. Teachers appropriately use summative assessments to address department learning goals and expectations. Assessments are revised at the end of the semester or year to inform instructional practice and curricular modifications. Teachers employ a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies which supports students in achieving the course learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, classroom observations, students, student work)

Teachers collaborate formally through professional development on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. The school provides some time for teachers, building leaders, and administrators to collaborate, according to 67 percent of teachers. When scheduled, PLC meetings are used for review of student data. The leadership team meets weekly with the associate principal to review data and student work, and this work is brought back to departments to ensure that they are meeting student needs. The school has incorporated literacy across the curriculum to improve student

reading and writing. Common assessments are used for final exams. If time permits, teachers focus on common academic competencies and develop formative and summative assessments. When the school provides more formally scheduled time for collaboration on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessment practices, this work will help to advance the achievement of common curricular goals. (teachers, administrators, Endicott survey, self-study)

Teachers often provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure that students revise and improve their work, as 56.4 percent of students have their work assessed in a reasonable amount of time, and 62 percent says that teachers offer suggestions to help improve their work. Students and teachers report that there has been improvement in this area; this is also evident in student work samples. For example, physics incorporated a detailed rubric and feedback to students; biotechnology provided feedback on notebook entries; and English included peer feedback and teacher feedback on multiple drafts and a self-assessment rubric with clearly defined learning expectations. Other courses included checklists - some with teacher and student feedback - and a variety of content-specific rubrics to assess student progress in meeting learning expectations. Teachers provide opportunities for students to revise and resubmit their improved work prior to formal summative assessment. As a result of teachers having improved their practice of providing specific, timely, and corrective feedback, students benefit from expanded opportunities to revise and improve their work. (Endicott survey, students, teachers, student work)

Teachers often use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning and ensuring that all students understand concepts and skills; however, they are not fully integrating the school-wide rubrics into their practice. Teachers use PLC meetings and after-school meetings to address issues related to instruction and assessment. Formative assessment strategies were observed in English through pre-reading activities during which students circled unfamiliar words and explained elements of mood and tone to prepare for a close reading exercise. In history, students debated, presented, and were questioned about information from readings. In another history class, students played a game to demonstrate their understanding of socialism, capitalism, and communism as a pre-cursor for deeper work that presented perspectives about who initiated the Cold War. In robotics, students were questioned about design options and strategies used to propel their vehicles and made purposeful revisions and adjustments. Through these various strategies, teachers were able to scaffold and adapt instruction. When teachers use formative assessment to inform and adapt instruction that reflect principles of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and fully integrate the school-wide rubrics into their practice, they will optimize their ability to ensure that all students meet the expectations. (self-study, teachers, students, student work)

Teachers and administrators individually and collaboratively examine some evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice. The learning leadership team comprised of lead teachers/instructional coaches and the associate principal meet weekly to address progress toward the school's goals, focusing on embedding literacy across the curriculum; however, it is unclear how information shared at PLCs has been utilized to improve instruction or to modify the curriculum beyond the implementation of literacy strategies. No formal plan is in place to address consistency of feedback, revision, and modifications to the curriculum; nevertheless, most students feel that their teachers use a variety of methods to assess learning (e.g., tests, presentations, reports,

research, etc.). Some faculty members, especially those teaching the same course, meet four times per year to collectively examine a variety and range of student work, common course assessments, grade-level assessments, and standardized assessments. Their work to revise and improve curriculum and instructional practices includes using PSAT, SAT, MCAS, and common final exams to determine instructional and curricular weaknesses. Administrators from the sending school meet with the high school administrators and members of the guidance department to review academic, physical, and behavioral needs of incoming students. They look at STAR assessment data as a resource to track student achievement throughout the school year. It is unclear how this data is used to formally address gaps in achievement and to inform curriculum and instruction. Survey data of graduating students is limited to the Naviance® graduation survey; however, data from post-secondary schools is not currently collected. Some teachers, individually and collaboratively, revise curriculum and improve instructional practice as the result of input from lead teachers; however, this collaborative review process requires continued contributions to the revision and piloting of the school-wide rubrics so that they are fully utilized by the entire faculty. This work will advance the school's ability to improve instructional practices and to modify curriculum effectively to reflect core values, beliefs and learning expectations school-wide. (school improvement plan, administrators, Endicott survey, self-study, teachers)

Grading and reporting practices are not regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning, as only 25 percent of the professional staff regularly review and revise grading to ensure alignment. While grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised by some teachers, in most cases they are not reviewed in regard to their alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about student learning. These reviews are done in isolation without an effort for achieve consistency across teachers, courses, and departments. Currently, most members of the professional staff (80 percent) communicate through Aspen® to keep students and families informed about student progress and achievement. School administrators acknowledge that frequent utilization of Aspen® is considered a professional expectation. Progress reports and report cards are issued quarterly. The school is in the process of developing a system for formally implementing school-wide rubrics for measuring achievement of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and recognizes the importance of completing this work. Grading and reporting practices are not regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning, but evidence indicates that the school is making positive gains toward that end; once the school fully implements this process, the professional staff will be able to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, students, parents)

## COMMENDATIONS

1. Use of formative and summative assessments to inform and adapt instruction and modify curriculum to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. The analysis of student work indicating that the utilization of course-specific rubrics is pervasive
3. The staff members' actively seeking ways to connect to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and their commitment to the success of all students
4. The movement toward common department rubrics that ensure consistency
5. The opportunities provided for students to revise work and improve performance

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Formally implement school-wide analytic rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's academic, social, and civic competencies
2. Implement a school-wide process to regularly communicate individual student progress and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Provide sufficient scheduled time for formal assessment data analysis

# 5

## School Culture and Leadership

*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, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).
3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the guidance counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

## CONCLUSIONS

To a certain extent, the school community 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. Students identify pervasive school spirit, citing events such as the Special Olympics and spirit week. According to students, participation in after-school activities is high. Additionally, parents report that students are involved in many different co-curricular activities, and there is substantial student attendance at all school-sponsored events. Both inside and outside of the classroom, teachers are invested in students and oversee such activities as Homework Hangout as well as serve as club advisors and coaches. Throughout the school facility, there are numerous displays of positive student achievement, such as trophies, awards, and college acceptance letters; however, only 57 percent of students take pride in the school. To a degree, the school provides a safe learning environment; however, students report that there are segmented populations of the student body. Only 38 percent of students agree they respect one another, while 21 percent indicate bullying is a problem. The bullying policy is posted on the school's website, and teachers report a low incidence of bullying within the classroom; however, teachers also indicate that social media allows students to engage in behavior outside of school that negatively impacts the learning environment, and they identify a segment of the student population that finds it difficult to meld with the existing school factions. Both a dean and the principal greet students as they arrive at school and manage the outside flow of students. The school employs three security officers/hall monitors as well as a school resource officer (SRO). Five cafeteria monitors are also employed. Three deans oversee student discipline by splitting the student population into thirds. Deans follow students for all four years of their education to provide consistency. All students are issued identification cards which are shown to a security officer upon entrance into the building if they are tardy. However, there is no published comprehensive plan to deal with school emergencies. Teachers could not locate emergency folders or emergency flip charts. Teachers state that emergency folders are not kept in a central location, and the folder that once existed has not been updated in over five years. Emergency flip charts were not visible in classrooms. Secretarial staff members state that new teachers are issued emergency folders, and returning staff must use their old folders. The only two emergency responses that teachers and secretarial staff could identify were fire drill and "code red." During student shadowing, visiting team members observed that the vast majority of staff did not take student attendance after first period. The school community has not adopted a formal process to review its school culture and safety protocols. Once work in both of these areas is completed, the professional staff will be able to ensure that all students will be able to consistently reach high expectations and take ownership and pride in the school community, fully capitalizing on their positive school spirit. Moreover, the school will be able to ensure that all members of the learning community understand their respective roles in times of crisis. (students, teachers, Endicott survey, classroom observations, parents, school support staff, facility tour)

The school fosters heterogeneity, but not in core courses, because every student over the course of the high school experience is not enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages). Nevertheless, students are required to enroll in at least seven non-core courses that are heterogeneously grouped, which include one class in the unified arts or music departments, a Freshman Seminar course, four physical education classes, and one health class. For example,

fully inclusive physical education classes were observed during the facility tour by the visiting team. The majority of students also take a level one world languages course which is a heterogeneously grouped class. Both students and teachers report that students with developmental disabilities are integrated and accepted into all aspects of school life and are not targeted or bullied by the rest of the school community. Another way that the school promotes inclusivity of all students is through the Learning Partnerships course that teams general education students with developmentally disabled students. Once every student over the course of his or her Dartmouth High School experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages), the school will substantially improve equitability and inclusivity for all students. (panel presentation, students, administrators, classroom observations)

There is no formal, ongoing program 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. There is not a formal, ongoing advisory period. Students interviewed were able to identify trusted adults within the school community to assist them. As a result of recommendations from the last NEASC decennial evaluation and a Smaller Learning Communities Grant award, a pilot advisory period was implemented. Teachers indicate that advisory period, developed by a staff member as part of an administrative licensure program, was supported by a majority of the staff. The advisory met twice per month for 20 minutes within the current block schedule, but the new program was not successfully bargained with or ratified by the teachers' bargaining unit. The advisory period and other scheduling changes were proposed by administrators as part of negotiations for a successor agreement, but removed as a proposal prior to a tentative agreement being reached. When the professional staff implements the planned formal advisory program, all students will be assured the opportunity to receive personal attention necessary to support successful achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, students, teachers, administrators)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and the faculty often engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning. In addition, they frequently use resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices. The professional staff often dedicates formal time to implement professional development and informally apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Along with a few formal scheduled professional days within the academic year, teachers report that they sometimes engage in professional development during monthly faculty meetings. The professional development sessions focus on a wide array of topics with the most recent emphasis being on developing literacy across curriculum, school-wide rubrics, and new teacher evaluations. However, teachers also report that they are not allotted enough time to work with fellow department members, expressing a need for more time to collaborate with their colleagues within the same subject area to examine curriculum, contemplate teaching practices, and explore learning. Teachers indicate that when they have questions or need advice about their instruction, they are able to speak with their instructional coach/lead teachers for assistance; however, there are also some teachers who mention that their instructional coach/lead teachers are extremely busy and overwhelmed. Consequently, they are not always available to provide support when teachers seek it. Some teachers comment that they prefer the former administrative system that featured department heads instead of instructional coach/lead

teachers, allowing for more structured curriculum guidance. Even though there are sufficient opportunities for professional development, it is rather difficult for teachers to actually share, reflect, and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained through professional development trainings due to sparse allotted time for teachers of the same subject to work together. The school regularly utilizes outside sources to train in best practices and most current research; for example, Katanna Connolly provided professional development on literacy across the curriculum and Billie Donegan offered training on creating formative and summative assessments. Some special education teachers indicate that they would like to receive more professional development on the co-teaching model due to confusion in the classroom about teacher roles. When the school provides adequate time for teachers in the same content area to collaborate, it will enhance substantially its ability to improve student learning through professional development for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, maintain currency with best practices, and consistently apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (teachers, self-study, panel presentation, administrators)

School leaders use the Research for Better Teaching (RBT) evaluation and supervision process, despite having been trained in the state-mandated teacher evaluation system, which they do not employ to any degree. Teachers affirm that members of the administrative team complete walk-throughs on a regular basis. The new state-mandated evaluation system is currently being negotiated between the Dartmouth Teachers' Association and the Dartmouth School Committee. When the parties agree upon and ratify the mandated researched-based evaluation and supervision process, all stakeholders can focus on improved student learning. (panel presentation, students, classroom observations, teachers)

The organization of time sometimes supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. The school's block schedule offers ample time for teachers to instruct effectively and affords students the opportunities to take elective courses; however, some teachers report that the block schedule disrupts continuity of instruction due to the potential long periods of time when students are not exposed to a certain subject. For example, a world languages student may take Spanish during the fall semester and, due to the block scheduling, may not be enrolled in a Spanish course again until the following fall. In order to provide professional collaboration among teachers during the current school day, students are released early once per month. Instructional coaches/lead teachers meet weekly to discuss cross-curricular goals and create plans to achieve identified aims. Moreover, teachers participate in voluntary professional learning communities twice per month. Even though this specific time is allotted for collaboration among teachers, they still report that they are not provided sufficient time to share best practices and to discuss curriculum and assessments. Instead, teachers state that they usually must adhere to the agenda items set by the administrators. Consequently, many teachers report frustrations with the lack of common planning time for teachers of the same content area. At this time, the school committee, the school administrative team, and the teachers' bargaining unit are in the process of considering other research-based schedule options that will maximize teaching and learning for students and will provide more time for teacher planning and collaboration. When these parties reach consensus, the school will benefit from expanded professional collaboration among teachers, who will be better able to address the learning needs of all students. (panel presentations, teachers, administrators, self-study)

Student class size and caseload often enables teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. The average class size is 21.1 students per class and special education teacher caseloads range from 6 to 14 students. The master schedule is run with varying class size limits set for maximum student class enrollment depending on course. Some class sizes are as high as 39 students in physical education and 30 students in psychology and Spanish Honors classes. Multiple classes run above 25 students per class; most notably, science department classes often exceed 25 students per class. Nevertheless, 81 percent of students report that class sizes in courses are reasonable, and 58 percent of teachers agree that student caseload and class sizes enable them to meet the learning needs of individual students. Moreover, 68 percent of parents agree that the number of students in their children's classes allow the teachers to meet their individual learning needs. However, during student shadowing, visiting team members observed that science lab classes have limited student stations and limited equipment that did not always accommodate the number of students in the classroom. When all stakeholders come to consensus concerning appropriate class size numbers for all classes on the master schedule and adhere to such limits, teachers will be able to consistently meet the learning needs of individual students in their classes. (Endicott survey, self-study, student shadowing, master scheduling documents)

The principal, working with other building leaders, provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. It is evident that the principal, the associate principal, and deans model the school's core values through being visible throughout the school building to support their teachers and to strengthen rapport with their students. During the 2011-2012 school year, the principal reorganized the administrative roles by creating three dean positions. Each dean is assigned a group of students that they follow and mentor for their four years enrolled in the high school. These positions were created in order to develop a relationship of trust to better address the needs of the whole person such as academic concerns, attendance issues, and physical and emotional well being; however, these instructional changes have caused the elimination of other positions such as department heads. Consequently, many faculty members report varied levels of support, confusion, and resistance due to the reorganization of the responsibilities. Despite these challenges to the school community's morale, the principal and other building leaders consistently provide instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers)

Students and parents have outlets to participate in the decision-making process of the school; however, only 38 percent of the students believe they have input, while 59 percent of the parents believe they have opportunities to be involved in meaningful decisions. Student interviews and the self-study reveal that selected students are involved in the student council, with the school committee (as representatives), and the principal's student advisory council. Parents have an opportunity to serve on school council and hiring committees, and the principal attends PTO meetings to listen to parental concerns. Parents sometimes attend school committee meetings, and there is high parent involvement in booster clubs to raise supplemental funds for specific sports and extracurricular activities. Only 45 percent of the teachers believe that they are involved in important decisions made at school. The self-study cites Survey Monkey® surveys completed by staff, students, and parents; however, these survey outcomes were not decisive regarding intended audiences and implementation of a plan based on survey results. The principal convenes hiring committees, which include teachers, parents, and students when new staff is needed. Teachers indicate that a vast majority of changes to the

school community are directives articulated from the top down. According to teachers, restructuring of the administrative team and loss of department heads results in less two-way communication, as the department heads were the conduit between the teachers and the principal. Instructional coaches/lead teachers report that the change from department meetings to PLC meetings that address student learning, result in less time to address departmental concerns that staff may want to discuss. Instructional coaches/lead teachers also indicate they have a voice at leadership meetings to share departmental concerns with administrators. Last year, a faculty council was created to improve school climate and culture. The council, comprised of teachers and teachers' aides, host faculty breakfasts to promote collegiality. The council also created the Respect Big Green program to support random acts of kindness. While several opportunities currently exist that allow teachers, students, and parents to be involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making, a more deliberate effort needs to be made to include all stakeholders in added decision-making to promote responsibility and ownership. When results of collaborative decision-making representing all constituents are reported out to all stakeholders, the school climate will reflect the school's mission and goals. (Endicott survey, parents, self-study, teachers)

Teachers generally exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Many teachers lead initiatives and take on coaching and advisory roles of extracurricular clubs. The school's National Honor Society induction was held during the accreditation visit, which allowed the team to observe the dedication and commitment of the advisor involved in this organization. Another major teacher-driven program is Helping Hands, a group that was created by teachers to help students in financial need who were missing out on opportunities such as field trips and yearbooks. This organization regularly sponsors fundraisers at the school to fund these students' needs. Both teachers and students emphasize that there is a significant amount of school pride. Many teachers and students are encouraged to begin clubs and organize events for the school community; as a result, teachers are able to impact the improvement of the school and encourage students' engagement through their leadership and initiative roles. (teachers, classroom observations, panel presentation, students, teachers)

The school committee, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school committee supports decisions made by the superintendent and principal. The self-study report corroborates the school committee's support for the superintendent and principal. Recent restructuring of the high school administrative team is an example of how the principal and superintendent work collaboratively together to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Yearly, the principal presents the school improvement plan to the school committee and reports to the committee, as necessary, about ongoing high school initiatives. Moreover, 57 percent of staff agrees that the school committee, superintendent, and principal collaborate in the process of achieving learning expectations. The school committee, superintendent, and principal work together to provide students with resources and opportunities identified as necessary to ensure 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are acquired; consequently, they support the school in realizing its core values and beliefs about learning. (Endicott survey, school committee, self-study, administrators)

The school committee and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. School committee members act as partners to improve student performance while the principal acts as the educational leader and manager of the

school, as she supervises the school programs and property and directs the daily operations. The principal makes hiring and budgetary decisions with minimal intervention from the superintendent or the school committee. When concerns arise, the school committee members and the superintendent trust the principal to make the necessary decisions to effectively lead the school. The school committee provides the funding necessary to support the principal in implementing her plans and endeavors that help students meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The school committee and superintendent listen to the needs of the principal, and then provide the resources to support her, providing her with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. (panel presentation, self-study, school committee, administrators)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The school's positive, welcoming, and respectful environment for teaching and learning
2. The variety of co-curricular opportunities afforded to students that impact the improvement of the school and encourage students' engagement
3. The frequent engagement in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning by the professional staff
4. The high expectations for student behavior
5. The strong student and teacher relationships
6. The collaboration between the school committee, superintendent, and principal that helps the school to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Implement a formal ongoing program 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement classes that are grouped to ensure equitable, inclusive, and challenging learning opportunities for all students
3. Define, cultivate, and celebrate a school culture that is tied to the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations for all stakeholders
4. Engage all stakeholders in goal-oriented collaboration on school-wide initiatives
5. Schedule formal common planning time for content-area teachers
6. Implement the state-mandated teacher evaluation system

# 6

## School Resources for Learning

*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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including those identified as having special needs and general education at-risk students that support each student's achievement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. More than 57 percent of parents report that the school has timely and coordinated strategies to meet the needs of all students. Additionally, 63 percent of staff believes that the school has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including special education, 504, and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's learning expectations. The case management team consisting of a dean, two guidance counselors, school psychologist, nurse, and social workers meet on a weekly basis to review cases. Attendance, grades, and behavior are reviewed. Intervention strategies are created through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. Staff can refer students to RTI by filling out a form. The case management team with the addition of regular education teachers, who vary based on the student's teachers, becomes the RTI team. This team creates interventions based on the areas of concern and those interventions are communicated to teachers by passing out a hardcopy of the intervention plan. However, systematic research-based interventions are not used, and data is not collected to analyze student progress and to evaluate the success of the plans. A student support team program provides services for students with excessive behavioral and academic concerns, through which they receive individual and small group instruction and counseling. Also a crisis response team convenes to create and implement interventions at the time of crisis. As the school continues to coordinate intervention strategies for all students, including those who qualify for special services and the general education at-risk students, it enhances and fully supports each student's achievement of the learning expectations. (self-study, administrators, school counselors, teachers, Endicott survey)

Dartmouth High School provides adequate information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. The professional staff uses the Aspen<sup>®</sup> system to communicate data, including PSAT, AP, and MCAS scores, to students and parents. Parents can also see course grades on the Aspen<sup>®</sup>; however, not all teachers publish progress grades on the system; as a result, parents are not always aware of students' grades until the end of the semester. School counselors mail letters home to parents of students with two or more failures at the close of every semester. Students who are in danger of not graduating receive a certified letter mailed home. Deans send letters home to parents of students with attendance concerns (e.g., when students are nearing nine absences in a class, as then they are in danger of losing credit in the course). The school also communicates support services via the scrolling sign in front of the school, emails, Twitter<sup>®</sup>, postcards, personal phone calls, the AlertNow<sup>®</sup> automated call system, and on the school's website. The Endicott survey states that 82.3 percent of parents agree that information on support services is communicated to them. The professional staff reports high parent attendance and participation in available student support services. The school often provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services which serves to enhance and improve student learning and well-being. (self-study, Endicott survey, school support staff, parents, teachers)

Student support services staff members employ a range of technology programs to deliver an effective assortment of coordinated services for all students. The guidance department uses Naviance<sup>®</sup> for post-secondary planning and to allow college application materials to be submitted on the behalf of students. Aspen<sup>®</sup> is used as a central location to store

information about students including individual education plans (IEPs), 504 plans, health information, parent/guardian information, and discipline notices. Initiatives are in place to use STAR® data to analyze student performance. A number of ELL students have access to iPads® and use iTranslate® to assist with translation. iPad® carts are available to all departments and can be used upon request. Special education teachers have an iPad® cart that is dedicated to their department. Computer labs are available in the school that staff can reserve for use. The school's support services regularly use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. Even though not all technology is working all of the time, the support services staff utilizes a wide range of it to enable each student to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, school resources subcommittee members, teachers, guidance counselors, facility tour)

The school's counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. Six school counselors serve 1,124 students, with each counselor servicing no more than 200 students. A dean, two social workers, and one school psychologist collaborate with the school counselors during case management meetings and to supplement personal/social counseling services. The school counseling department delivers four lessons to students, one in each year. All lessons are related to academic and career/college planning, and clearly aligned to the core values and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. Although only 25.6 percent of students report that they meet with their school counselor regularly, students also report that they meet with their school counselor at minimum once a year individually to plan their courses. School counselors are available and responsive to students, meeting with them to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. Students are aware of the process for requesting appointments with their counselor and most appointments are made within 24 hours of the request. Juniors and seniors meet with their counselors more frequently as they are particularly focused on future planning. Additionally, students become more comfortable with their counselor over time: 83.3 percent of seniors report they are comfortable going to the guidance counselor, whereas 64.5 percent of juniors, 60.8 percent of sophomores and 46.2 percent of freshmen feel comfortable. The social workers also develop and deliver programs to students; for example, one of the programs delivered this year by the social workers was an anti-bullying lesson. The connection between students and their counselors is favorable due to the school's appropriate counselor-to-student ratio.

The school's counseling services analyze relevant assessment data, such as PSAT, MCAS, and AP scores to assist students in planning their course load. School counselors collect data after some programs to evaluate the success of the program, such as the financial aid evening program. Data is also gathered informally through parent emails. Annual surveys were administered in the past; however, those surveys are no longer administered. Nevertheless, the counseling department and social workers appropriately deliver collaborative outreach and referral to external mental health agencies and social service providers. School counselors often refer students to social workers, who provide assistance to families in need of outside services. The school counseling services provide individual, group, and programmatic support to students, and work collaboratively with the community to provide outreach services. When the counselors resume systematic gathering of feedback from the school community, they will be able to effectively improve services to ensure that each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, teachers, students, parents, guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, administrators)

The school's health services has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel to 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. The school employs one full-time nurse and a .2 FTE nursing student who assists the nurse one day per week. Sixty percent of staff and 51 percent of parents report that the school's health services program has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. The school health service department provides preventative and direct intervention services, and their preventative measures include universal screenings for vision, hearing, posture, and body mass index. Direct intervention services happen daily with students being treated for acute illnesses and dispensing of daily medication. Through the direct intervention services, the nurse is able to provide ongoing student health assessments. Dartmouth High School's health services provide referrals when appropriate. Because the school has nursing services available in the building throughout the school day to provide preventative health services and direct intervention for students, it is able to meet the school's health services needs. (Endicott survey, self-study, school nurse, parents)

Library media services are often integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified personnel and support staff. The library media personnel are actively engaged in the development and implementation of the school's curriculum according to 78 percent of the teachers. The library media staff members collaborate with teachers on an as-needed basis to create lessons and to provide resources for the delivery and implementation of the curriculum. The library media specialist teaches a common lesson to all freshmen through the Freshman Seminar course to introduce students to the library media center, including effective ways to conduct research in the facility. The library media personnel contact all Freshman Seminar teachers to ensure that all classes report to the library media center to participate in the lesson, thereby ensuring that their services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices.

The library media center provides a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum. Teachers are able to book the library media center for classes, and three classes can be accommodated at one time. Students who ask for a pass are also able to use the library media center throughout the day, and 76.4 percent of students agree that the library media center is available to them before, during, and after school hours. The library media center provides a wide range of materials, technology, and other information services as confirmed by 82.9 percent of the students. In the 2012-2013 school year, there were 325 fiction and nonfiction acquisitions as well as 23 new laptops purchased. The library media center also subscribes to Journal Storage® (JSTOR), INFOTRAC®, EasyBib School Edition®, MassCat, and Catalyst Digital™. Completed at the start of the 2013-2014 school year, the library media specialist and assistant converted the library media center collection to a Dewey-hybrid system, a research-oriented program that enables students to more effectively pursue 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

The school's technology does not adequately support the needs of students and staff. The Wi-Fi is designed to support 90 simultaneous connections, yet staff and students explain that the connections are consistently slow or nonexistent. Also, the desktop computers often crash unexpectedly and are not currently linked up to the library media center's printer. In

addition, the library media center's SMART Board is not fully functional. When the technology is updated, students and faculty will be able to effectively pursue 21<sup>st</sup> century learning.

There is some evidence of ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and to ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. The library media staff members researched the use and implementation of the new Dewey-hybrid system so students and staff could more readily locate and utilize resources. The library media personnel then modified the system to assist students in locating literary criticism based upon feedback from the English department. Students, teachers, and parents also have the opportunity to post questions on the library media center's blog which provides feedback. As the library media staff members continue to integrate materials, technologies, and other information services into the curriculum, they will actively engage and respond to students' interests and will continue to support independent learning as students strive to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, library media staff members, student work, teachers, technology coordinator)

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. There are eleven special needs educators who serve as liaisons for the approximately 12 students with special needs on their caseload. The special education teachers co-teach inclusion classes, while 66.7 percent of staff reports that support services personnel collaborate with teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to achieve the school's learning expectations. The associate principal is assigned the special education department as an area of supervision and support; however, the special education department lacks a lead teacher/instructional coach, which impedes consistent collaboration and communication. Co-teachers do not have common planning time. Students who are identified as having an impairment that substantially limits a life activity are provided a 504 plan, which is managed by the deans. There is one ESL teacher for the eight English language learners. Annual meetings are held to review data, such as grades, attendance, and standardized test scores, to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the support services for identified students in order to improve services and to ensure each student achieves the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, Endicott survey)

## COMMENDATIONS

1. The school counseling staff that is proactive in ensuring that students successfully transition into and out of the school
2. The strong connection between students and their counselors reinforced by the favorable school counselor to student ratio at the school
3. The information provided to all families about available student support services that enhances and improves student learning and well-being
4. The wide range of materials, technology, and other information services provided by the library media center
5. The new Dewey-hybrid library media classification system that is tailored to student browsing behavior and reflects the school's curriculum
6. The weekly case management meetings that are specifically aimed at students who are at-risk and families who are in need

7. The collaborative work of the health services staff with other departments to ensure the implementation of preventative health services

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Consistently use the Aspen® grade reporting system, ensuring frequent teacher communication of academic success and progress to students and families
2. Update the current wireless Internet system and technology hardware to address the needs of the library media center
3. Provide collaboration opportunities for special education teachers and regular education teachers in inclusion classes
4. Identify leadership for the special education and school counseling departments



## Community Resources for Learning

*The achievement of the school's 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

## CONCLUSIONS

There have been increases in the total budget for the high school in past years, which helps to provide students with up-to-date learning pathways; however, the community and the district's governing body have not always provided a consistent level of funding for the school. The program of studies offers more than 100 courses, 16 Advanced Placement courses and a number of special service programs including an early childhood education certification program and a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program. The school has recently added a chief technology officer, in an effort to develop infrastructure which supports 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. There is an adequate professional and support staff to ensure quality instruction. Professional development allowances are in place throughout the district to fund and support certified staff. The principal coordinates lead teachers/instructional coaches to guide professional learning communities which work to develop curriculum with rigor and to provide attention to developing students who are ready for career and college. Budget increases averaging 2.8 percent over the past three years have supported some of these programs, but only 59 percent of students report that adequate computers are available to them before, during, and after school. Computer labs, laptops, digital projectors, and teacher laptops are available to support teaching and learning; however, the limited number of SMART Boards and document cameras, exacerbated by incomplete broadband capacity, hinder the ability of the students and staff to use the technology to the fullest. The SMART Board in the library media center has a faulty connection cord and its size does not allow for large classes to see the screen at one time. Teachers state that there is a plan to replace some textbooks (e.g., books used in physics classes that were copyrighted in 2002 are slated to be replaced). Science teachers also report that they usually have needed materials for their classes, but, because they must share them, there are frequently not enough materials to be shared (e.g., there is only one motion detector to be shared amongst the physics classes). There has been some discussion concerning the district's examining a one-to-one platform which would include textbooks on an electronic interface, but no decisions have been announced. Evidence of roof leaks was noted during a facility tour. Due to the fact that the building is eleven years old, scratches and scrapes and other signs of wear on the hallway walls are evident. When there remains a sustained commitment to provide consistently adequate funding for textbooks, technology and physical plant needs, the school will be able to provide fully an environment to support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, teachers, facility staff members, facility tour, school committee)

The school has informal short-term plans and formal long-term plans intended to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on a daily basis; however, the school was built in 2003 and is in need of painting, building and grounds upkeep, and technical updates. Funding is in place to complete the painting over the summer of 2014. Teachers and students state that there are significant issues with wireless access as well as with desktop computers in classrooms and computer labs that need to be replaced and updated. Administrators report that these updates are included in the upcoming school year's budget request. Teachers report issues with the Heating Air Conditioning and Ventilation (HVAC) system, and maintenance regularly responds to concerns in this area; however, problems continue to occur. Teachers and school administrators report that the town provides adequate funding to update maintenance and repairs on the building and grounds; conversely, parents and students cite substantial maintenance issues with the athletic fields. Sustained community support of the school's

programs, equipment, and physical plant will ensure consistency and quality of maintenance, repair, upgrading, and cleanliness. (facility tour, administrators, parents, students, teachers, Endicott survey, self-study)

The community funds, and the school implements, a long-range plan. The school has a five-year capital improvement plan in place to maintain the facilities from 2014–2018. This plan addresses various programs, building maintenance, and specifies updates in technology, such as adding wireless capability and new computers for classrooms and computer labs. The updates in the building include repairs to multiple roofing leaks and replacing the gym floor. Administrators report that the town and school committee are very supportive of the school system, as evidenced by the approval of \$2 million in capital improvements for the school district each of the past two years. Included in these capital improvements has been a line item of \$200,000 for technology updates in the school system. A new chief technology administrator position was created this past year to provide expertise in the area of technology updates. Administrators state that the school receives adequate support and funding from the town and school committee regarding overall concerns. Administrators report that a new security position will be added into next year's budget to staff the building until 10:30 p.m. each school night. The school is making a concerted effort to ensure future funding to address ongoing needs of the building and staff. Enrollment projections reveal that, since 2009-2010, enrollment has slightly but steadily decreased from 1,168 to 1,124 in 2013-2014. Class offerings and staffing are based on these projections. When funding from the town adapts to the school's evolving program needs, there will be greater ability to ensure steady growth and to create new and innovative programs. (Endicott survey, technology plan, self-study, community resources subcommittee members, teachers, administrators)

Faculty members and building administrators have been actively engaged in the development and implementation of the budget. Most teachers (67 percent) disagree with the statement: "I have input into the development of the school budget," but teachers on the community resources standard subcommittee state they are provided sufficient materials and equipment to provide quality instruction, even though all of their requests may not always be met and in a timely manner. Administrators report being involved in the budget process and that they are supported by the school committee and town leaders regarding budgetary issues. They believe that many of their issues will be addressed in the upcoming five-year capital improvement plan. While teachers are involved in the budgetary process, there are inconsistencies with communication and involvement of the majority of staff in this area. Consequently, some of the numerous stakeholders in the evolving high school program are uncertain of the efficacy and relevance of their roles in designing and implementing the annual budget. (Endicott survey, community resources subcommittee members, teachers, administrators, self-study, facility tour)

The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. Dartmouth High School has a diverse number of classroom learning environments to accommodate teaching and learning. Parents, administrators, and students report that the school has adequate classroom space to deliver high quality core academic programs. The science labs are adequately equipped with materials conducive to the science classes offered; however, each science lab is shared between two science classrooms. Teachers report that this leads to issues in scheduling lab time (e.g., there is a lab being shared among three science classes offered at the same time). There is one cafeteria on the main floor of the building that is

used by all students and staff. Students and staff report that the cafeteria is sufficient in size with a capacity of 928. The school has five general computer labs and another computer lab specifically dedicated as a language lab. These computer labs need updating with new computers and specialized software, as needed in the computer aided design (CAD) class. Parents report that the performing arts department needs a larger storage area for instruments and other music equipment. The visual arts department has adequate space to run its specialized classes and programs. The building has three departmental planning suites, one on each floor. Teachers use these suites to eat lunch, have departmental or team meetings, store materials, and prepare lesson materials. There is a large amount of unused space in these areas. Administrators, teachers, and staff report that there is adequate space for administrative offices, private conference rooms, guidance reception, and the health suite. There is one main auditorium in the school with a capacity of 793, which is not enough space to gather the full student body of 1,124. There is a field house on the main floor of the school used by physical education staff and for numerous sports teams. Staff and parents report that the gym floor is in need of repairs. The indoor track in the field house is not adequate to hold track meets, and the school needs to bus the track team to an out-of-town venue for home meets. Staff members report that there is adequate parking space for all constituents using the building. The school building is eleven years old and was built to support high quality programs and services at that time, but there are numerous updates needed in order to better prepare students to acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills. (self-study, parents, facility tour, students, teachers, Endicott survey, administrators, office support staff)

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. Specifically, the school has provided documentation for a variety of areas, including a comprehensive security assessment, boiler inspections, fire department certification, evacuation drills, and food service inspections. All service providers, such as electricians and plumbers, are certified with up-to-date documentation. Appropriate documentation is kept on file and is available from the director of property services; consequently, all stakeholders are assured of a safe and well-maintained facility. (certificate documentation, director of facility maintenance, self-study)

It is evident that the school engages parents and families as partners in each student's education and reaches out to those families who have been less connected with the school. Dartmouth High School is providing necessary communications to parents and families, and 80 percent of parents and staff report that such communication is sufficient. An example includes use of the AlertNow<sup>®</sup> automated system, by which all numbers given as contacts are called to inform families about school cancelations, late starts, and important activities such as financial aid night, freshman orientation, junior parents night, and MCAS support offerings. Another avenue for teacher-parent contact is the Aspen<sup>®</sup> parent portal, through which parents are able to view student grades in real time as teachers post them. Teachers are given an e-mail address that is standardized throughout the system for ease in contact. Links to teacher emails are found on the school's website. Parents and teachers routinely communicate by email about students. In addition to AlertNow<sup>®</sup> calls and the website, school-wide announcements are posted in the local newspaper. Written communication is also an important part of communication which may take the form of postcards, registered letters, and standard letters from the principal about senior activities. Parent and family partnership has also been encouraged through lessons that include writing letters to students as an avenue to engage

participation in the ongoing education of students. Communication with parents and all interested parties invited to individual education meetings are mailed home in adequate time to make arrangements for attendance. Phone calls home are supported with privacy in teacher work areas or from individual offices. Numerous safeguards are in place, thereby ensuring communication between the school and the families that it serves. (teachers, self-study, Endicott survey, parents)

The school consistently works with parents, community, business and higher education partnerships that support student learning. The school has several business and industry partnerships with the school (e.g., an important partnership with Bristol Community College and local businesses and industry resulted in the participation of 70 students in internships last semester). In these internships, students participate in authentic activities that link classroom experience with real world experience. Dartmouth Educational Fund is an important partner that provides funding for many projects including the Dartmouth High School early childhood education program, chemistry club, Key Club, and the physical education department. Supports for specific educational programs have come from Bridgewater State University with the East View Globe and Bristol Community College in their Portuguese Language Day activities. Dartmouth High School's STEM program draws from the expertise of many area organizations including Boston University School of Medicine, Museum Institute for Teaching Science, Lockheed Martin, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. The school demonstrates a continued partnership with all students. Parents and all interested parties are invited to, and are provided with all required information for, annual IEP and 504 meetings. Opportunities for students to meet their transitional goals are supported by local business and industry in programs such as the town recycling program. Students are supported as they participate in the Special Olympics program which has supported as many as 17 students and post-grads in one year. Parents are encouraged to join the parent teacher organization (PTO). Through this group, parents have opportunities to meet with school staff on a regular basis; have a voice on some of the policies at the school; and fund emerging programs and clubs at the school. Last year, the PTO funded eight initiatives serving over 200 students. Another opportunity for parents is participation in the special education parent advisory council, through which they are able to discuss timely education topics helping them to navigate, advocate, and be involved in the special education process and to promote equity for all students. Dartmouth School Music Association's fundraising efforts support the music programs, by, for instance, having raised over \$139,000 in the 2012-2013 school year. Community activities that are supported by the school include the use of facilities for the annual student art show and the Southeastern Massachusetts School Day Games. Business leaders and parents are often invited to speak with students as experts in their field. Some recent guests included Jacqueline Sylvia, owner of JS Web Design, Mr. John Nunes, Director of Financial Services and Treasurer of the City of Fall River, Ms. Alizete Lagesse, Vice President, Citizen's Bank. An extensive partnership allows enrollment at several area colleges such as University of Massachusetts - Dartmouth, Bristol Community College, University of Rhode Island, and Rhode Island College, where students further their studies and earn college credit while still enrolled in high school. Student exchange programs with Antero de Quintal High School in Ponta Delgada, Azores, and Ivers School, Sao Miguel, Azores, allow students to learn and grow in another culture. Opportunities for students to engage in community service include Helping Hands, Allen's Pond Wildlife Sanctuary, American Cancer Society, Buttonwood Park Zoo, Child and Family Services of New Bedford, Catholic Social Services, and Jeans for Teens. Many of the programs are aligned with co-curricular groups; the only

requirement to be involved is to be a member of the Dartmouth High School community. The school's numerous band competitions are supported and funded by grants and donations from the community. Students are also invited and encouraged to display work in high caliber showings such as Bierstadt Art Society and Scholastic Alliance for Young Artists and Writers and/or participate in competitions such as Sea Perch and the Southeastern Massachusetts Conference Mathematics League. There are many and varied community partnerships with businesses, parents, and higher education facilities that offer students opportunities to achieve the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, students, community resources subcommittee members, parents)

## **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The scheduled general maintenance to maintain a properly running facility that supports the students and community
2. The continued support and a positive relationship between the school district and the town of Dartmouth
3. The school's updated permits, compliance with state laws for local fire, health, and safety regulations, and the up-to-date certifications and licenses possessed by all maintenance and kitchen personnel
4. The extensive variety of communication used by the professional staff to connect to families
5. The strong productive partnerships between the school and the community, businesses, and institutions of higher education and extended learning

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Develop and implement a plan to address the leaks in the roof
2. Budget for and acquire all necessary textbooks
3. Upgrade and address technology needs to support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning
4. Ensure sufficient space for the school's growing music program
5. Address the ongoing problems with regulating the HVAC system throughout the building to ensure a suitable environment for teaching and learning
6. Review custodial and maintenance support to ensure that cleaning and repairs are completed in a timely manner
7. Develop a master cleaning plan to include deep cleaning of the entire facility on a regular basis, with special attention to high use areas
8. Resolve maintenance issues concerning the athletic fields

## FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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 Dartmouth High 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 Committee requires that the evaluation report be made public in accordance with the Committee's Policy on Distribution, Use and Scope of the Visiting Committee Report.

A school's continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Committee 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 Committee requires that the principal of Dartmouth High School 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 Committee 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 Committee 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 Committee has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Committee within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts on the school's adherence to the Committee'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 Committee's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 55. 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 Committee office has current statistical data on the school.

The Committee 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 Committee'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 Committee staff following the on-site visit.

In closing, the visiting team wishes to express its appreciation to the students, parents, administrators, faculty members, and support staff of Dartmouth High School for their hospitality and assistance during our visit to the school. The planning prior to the visit and the attention to details that supported the visiting team's daily work, inquiry, and personal comfort were most appreciated. Because of this preparation, planning, and support, the visiting team enjoyed a truly professional experience and found the meetings and discussions to be both valuable and beneficial in the process of the evaluation.

**Dartmouth High School  
NEASC Accreditation Visit  
March 30 - April 2, 2014**

**Visiting Committee**

<p><b>Francis Kennedy, Chair</b> Berlin High School Berlin, CT 06037</p>	<p><b>Ms. Marianne McLean</b> Blackstone-Millville Regional High School Blackstone, MA 01504</p>
<p><b>Craig Finely, Assistant Chair</b> Whitman-Hanson Regional School District Whitman, MA 02382</p>	<p><b>Ms. Ashley Pacheco</b> Taunton High School Taunton, MA 02780</p>
<p><b>Ms. Rhonda Ackerman</b> Holbrook Junior-Senior High School Holbrook, MA 02343</p>	<p><b>Mrs. Patricia Pires</b> Berlin High School Berlin, CT 06037</p>
<p><b>Mr. Matt Baione</b> Milford High School Milford, MA 01757</p>	<p><b>Ms. Margaret Pouliot</b> Pilgrim High School Warwick, RI 02886</p>
<p><b>Ms. Suzanne Fogarty</b> Melrose High School Melrose, MA 02176</p>	<p><b>Ms. Moheba Sayed</b> Marine Science Magnet High School Groton, CT 06340</p>
<p><b>Ms. Leslie Flowers</b> Farmington High School Farmington, CT 06032</p>	<p><b>Mr. Paul Sitton Hays</b> City on a Hill Charter Public Schools Jamaica Plain, MA 02130</p>
<p><b>Ms. Gail Mailhott-Foster</b> Hampshire Regional High School West Hampton, MA 01027</p>	<p><b>Ms. Lee Anne Todd</b> North Attleboro High School North Attleboro, MA 02760</p>
<p><b>Mr. John Marderosian</b> Southbridge Middle-High School Southbridge, MA 01550</p>	<p><b>Mr. Chimdi Uchendu</b> Boston Public Schools Boston, MA 02108</p>

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Committee on Public Secondary School

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Principals of member schools must report to the Committee 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 Committee'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

LIST OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

COMMENDATIONS

1. The development of a set of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations through an extensive process that involved all stakeholders
2. The development and maintenance of a positive school culture representing the established set of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
3. A strong dedication to student learning, attaining high standards, and improving achievement
4. The school culture that supports students, develops strong connections, and affords extra help through a teacher open-door policy
5. The fostering of tangible school pride for a significant number of students

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop and implement a strategy to ensure that all aspects of the Dartmouth High School Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations are known by all stakeholders
2. Publish and maintain the school-wide rubrics in such a way that it enables all stakeholders access, including students at the start of each course, to understand and track how the school is assessing and making progress toward attaining its 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Develop an efficient and timely process to regularly review the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities
4. Examine student performance and growth data to inform the review and revision of the Dartmouth High School 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Expectations

CURRICULUM

COMMENDATIONS

1. The efforts on the part of teachers and teacher leaders to create consistency in content and assessment for core classes across the curriculum
2. The existence of diverse elective course offerings

3. The high level of inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking skills, especially in honors and AP classes
4. The increased awareness of the importance of literacy skills and writing across all content areas and the efforts to incorporate both into all content curriculum
5. The opportunities for internships and off-campus educational experiences
6. The introduction of Professional Learning Communities

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Establish a formal, comprehensive, written curriculum for all content areas which is driven by and clearly supports the school's 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Formalize the process and protocols which will ensure that the written curriculum and the taught curriculum are identical
3. Form vertical articulation teams where none currently exist, and implement a defined process for the teams to communicate with all content areas K through 12 to ensure seamless coverage of key content and skills throughout the grade levels and across departments
4. Afford additional formal time for teachers to collaborate on the development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum

## INSTRUCTION

### **COMMENDATIONS**

1. The efforts of various teachers to personalize and differentiate instruction
2. The instructional practices that were changed to include more use of guided practice, graphic organizers, and close reading activities as a result of teacher analysis of students' open response essays
3. The integration of the use of course-specific rubrics in some classrooms as part of the renewed emphasis by teachers on strategies that encourage student self-assessment and self-reflection
4. The one thousand dollars per school year that is available to each teacher for training in content and pedagogy
5. The commitment of instructional practices that integrate the use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning, despite the issues related to wireless connectivity
6. The purposeful use of group learning activities by some teachers
7. The efforts to provide academic support to students who are struggling in various content areas such as math, science, and English language arts

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Ensure that all teachers regularly evaluate their instructional practices based on the newly developed core values and beliefs about learning
2. Increase collaboration across the content areas so that all teachers make regular connections with other content areas in order to make learning more meaningful to students

3. Ensure that every teacher has and employs strategies to fully engage students as active and self-directed learners and asks students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
4. Provide more regular opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment and reflection
5. Use student performance data from the school-wide rubrics to improve instruction

## ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Use of formative and summative assessments to inform and adapt instruction and modify curriculum to reflect 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. The analysis of student work indicating that the utilization of course-specific rubrics is pervasive
3. The staff members' actively seeking ways to connect to 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations and their commitment to the success of all students
4. The movement toward common department rubrics that ensure consistency
5. The opportunities provided for students to revise work and improve performance

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Formally implement school-wide analytic rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's academic, social, and civic competencies
2. Implement a school-wide process to regularly communicate individual student progress and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
3. Provide sufficient scheduled time for formal assessment data analysis

## SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

### COMMENDATIONS

1. The school's positive, welcoming, and respectful environment for teaching and learning
2. The variety of co-curricular opportunities afforded to students that impact the improvement of the school and encourage students' engagement
3. The frequent engagement in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning by the professional staff
4. The high expectations for student behavior
5. The strong student and teacher relationships
6. The collaboration between the school committee, superintendent, and principal that helps the school to achieve the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement a formal ongoing program 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 21<sup>st</sup> century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement classes that are grouped to ensure equitable, inclusive, and challenging learning opportunities for all students
3. Define, cultivate, and celebrate a school culture that is tied to the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations for all stakeholders
4. Engage all stakeholders in goal-oriented collaboration on school-wide initiatives
5. Schedule formal common planning time for content-area teachers
6. Implement the state-mandated teacher evaluation system

## SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

### COMMENDATIONS

1. The school counseling staff that is proactive in ensuring that students successfully transition into and out of the school
2. The strong connection between students and their counselors due to the favorable school counselor to student ratio at the school
3. The information provided to all families about available student support services that enhances and improves student learning and well-being
4. The wide range of materials, technology, and other information services provided by the library media center
5. The new Dewey-hybrid library media classification system that is tailored to student browsing behavior and reflects the school's curriculum
6. The weekly case management meetings that are specifically aimed at students who are at-risk and families who are in need
7. The collaborative work of the health services staff with other departments to ensure the implementation of preventative health services

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consistently use the Aspen® grade reporting system, ensuring frequent teacher communication of academic success and progress to students and families
2. Update the current wireless Internet system and technology hardware to address the needs of the library media center
3. Provide collaboration opportunities for special education teachers and regular education teachers in inclusion classes
4. Identify leadership for the special education and school counseling departments

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

### COMMENDATIONS

1. The scheduled general maintenance to maintain a properly running facility that supports the students and community
2. The continued support and a positive relationship between the school district and the town of Dartmouth
3. The school's updated permits, compliance with state laws for local fire, health, and safety regulations, and the up-to-date certifications and licenses possessed by all maintenance and kitchen personnel
4. The extensive variety of communication used by the professional staff to connect to families
5. The strong productive partnerships between the school and the community, businesses, and institutions of higher education and extended learning

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop and implement a plan to address the leaks in the roof
2. Budget for and acquire all necessary textbooks
3. Upgrade and address technology needs to support 21<sup>st</sup> century learning
4. Ensure sufficient space for the school's growing music program
5. Address the ongoing problems with regulating the HVAC system throughout the building to ensure a suitable environment for teaching and learning
6. Review custodial and maintenance support to ensure that cleaning and repairs are completed in a timely manner
7. Develop a master cleaning plan to include deep cleaning of the entire facility on a regular basis, with special attention to high use areas
8. Resolve maintenance issues concerning the athletic fields