

**New England Association of
School and Colleges, Inc.**

Commission on Public Schools



Committee on Public Secondary Schools

**Report of the Visiting Team for
South Windsor High School**

South Windsor, CT

September 30, 2018 - October 03, 2018

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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 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 this school in terms of the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Neither the total report nor any of its subsections is to be considered an evaluation of any individual staff member but rather a professional appraisal of the school as it appeared to the visiting committee.

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values and Beliefs About Learning

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

INSTRUCTION

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

core values and beliefs about learning.

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Support Standard

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

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

12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

- perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

South Windsor is located east of the Connecticut River six miles from Hartford. Ellington and East Windsor border the town to the north, Vernon to the east, East Hartford and Manchester to the south, and the Connecticut River to the west. The town covers twenty-eight square miles and is easily accessed from major interstate highways.

South Windsor is an upper-middle-class community with a total population of approximately 25,000. The median age is 44 years. Twenty-one percent of the town's population is classified as a minority: Asian - 10.2 percent, Black - 4.5 percent, Hispanic - 5.2 percent, Native American - 0.4 percent, other 1.1 percent. The median family income is \$97,389, and the median housing price is \$276,300. In South Windsor, the unemployment rate is 4.5 percent, and only 4.3 percent of the families within the school community have incomes below the poverty level. Consequently, South Windsor does not qualify for Title I support. Fifty-one percent of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher, and an additional 9 percent have had some college education.

Businesses in South Windsor fall into three main categories: service - 37 percent, trade - 24 percent, and construction- 11 percent. Agriculture, the way of life in the town's early years, now comprises only 1 percent of the South Windsor economy. The town's top employers are the Town of South Windsor, The May Company, Target, DST Output Services, and Doosan Fuel Cell America. Major employers in the greater Hartford area include United Technologies Corporation, insurance, and financial home offices, and the State of Connecticut.

South Windsor has experienced significant residential construction in recent years. Several developments of large, luxury homes, in various stages of completion, are scattered throughout the town. Attractive housing complexes for active adults have been very visible in the past few years as well. Most are priced well above the median. South Windsor continues to appeal to families of all ages because of its reputation for good schools, the quality of town services and programs, and the town's convenient location in the greater Hartford area.

South Windsor Public Schools include four elementary schools, a middle school serving grades six through eight, and one high school. CREC International Magnet School, serving elementary students is also located in South Windsor. The total student population is 4,188. One hundred and thirty-two nonresident students attend school in South Windsor, most coming from Hartford through a regional school choice program. The town allocates 84 percent of local taxes and 67 percent of total revenue to funding for schools. The town's 2016-2017 per pupil expenditure of \$17,060 was \$468 more than the state average of \$16,592.

The South Windsor High School student population is 1307 students in grades nine through twelve. Thirty nonresident students attend South Windsor High School through the choice program. While most of the students come to the high school from Timothy Edwards Middle School, approximately five come each year from Two Rivers Magnet School. Identifiable ethnic and racial groups comprise 28.8 percent of the student population: Asian - 13.7 percent, Black - 7.9 percent, Hispanic - 5.6 percent, and Native American - 0.4 percent, Other 1.2 percent. Eight different languages are represented in the small percentage of students who speak a primary language other than English. There are a total of 17 ELL students at the high school. Overall, enrollment at South Windsor High School has remained relatively level over the past four years.

There are 200 staff members at South Windsor High School, including 144 certified educators. (128 teachers, 1 media specialist, and 11 guidance and counseling professionals and 4 administrators). Eighteen percent of the teachers are non-tenured. The student to teacher ratio is 10.2/1. Teacher daily attendance rate averaged 95 percent over the past two years.

All core academic courses required for graduation are leveled based on the difficulty of curricular content, the nature of academic expectations, the sophistication of analysis required, and other related educational standards. Advanced placement (AP) and level four (honors) courses are the most challenging. Level three courses are identified as college preparatory. All elective classes are designated as level three courses. Many students

schedule a combination of levels according to specific talents and interests. Special Education students comprise 15 percent of the student population. Additionally, in 2017-2018 South Windsor High School implemented an alternative education program in an adjacent building. Nine students were selected to participate in this program. Approximately 11 students are scheduled to participate in the program in the 2018-2019 school year.

The school implemented an eight-period schedule in 2016-2017. All eight periods meet on Monday and six out of the eight periods meet on Tuesday through Friday. The average class size for the school is sixteen. The daily average student attendance rate was 95 percent over the last two years. The school has a graduation rate of 97.8 percent over the last two years with a dropout rate of 0.5 percent in 2016-2017 and 0.3 percent in 2017-2018.

In 2017, 92 percent of South Windsor High School students continued their education after graduation. Seventy-three percent attended a four-year college or university, while 19 percent attended a two-year college or other educational institution. One point five percent joined the military, and 5 percent went into immediate employment. Information was not obtainable for the remaining 1.5 percent.

In 2016 South Windsor had one National Merit Scholarship finalist and two the following year. Further student recognition takes place in many different ways at South Windsor High School. The Student of The Month Program recognizes eight students, two from each class, who are nominated by teachers each month. In May the school acknowledges high achieving students by presenting them with a certificate at a school-wide Honors Ceremony with many parents attending. Seniors are presented with a variety of awards and scholarships at the Senior Awards Ceremony in early June. Other awards ceremonies include the many athletic awards ceremonies that take place throughout the year, the annual science fair, the 9th-grade awards ceremony, and the Model United Nations World Summit.

The greater Hartford Area offers many educational and cultural opportunities for students to extend and enrich their learning beyond the school campus. The school participates in The University of Connecticut's Early College Experience Program, the Project Lead the Way engineering program and the Manchester Community College Career Paths Program. These programs allow students to earn college credit through courses taught at the high school. Students may also enroll in courses at a number of area colleges and universities including Manchester Community College. Summer school programs in West Hartford and Rockville are open to students who need to earn high school credit. Adult Education programs are available in neighboring towns of Manchester and Vernon. The school has established relationships with a variety of employers in the community who work as partners with the school to hire and supervise students enrolled in the Cooperative Work Experience program. Additionally, area businesses provide career learning opportunities to students through the Industry Advisory Board, which sponsors mock interview, career fair, and resume workshop events during a "career week". Although students are not required to participate in service learning as a condition for graduation, service learning is an expectation in some courses and co-curricular activities in the school. For example, students sponsor fundraisers, serve as volunteers for community events, and tutor younger students. These activities promote connections between the school and the community. One recent example is the South Windsor For the Kids dance marathon, which raised money for the Connecticut Children's Medical center.

Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

VISION

South Windsor High School's vision is to create a community of lifelong learners in an environment where students, staff, parents, and the district collaborate to reach a common goal of developing engaged learners.

MISSION

The mission of the South Windsor High School community is to cultivate intellectual growth, global citizenship, and personal wellness.

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

- Apply and communicate knowledge and skills across disciplines
- Demonstrate intellectual curiosity and academic growth
- Gather, assess and analyze information to solve problems and make informed decisions
- Apply problem-solving skills to diverse challenges in an ever changing society

SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

- Establish a network of relationships to assist in physical and mental well being
- Demonstrate caring, independence and resilience
- Engage in behaviors that foster a commitment to lifelong wellness

CIVIC EXPECTATIONS

- Understand varying opinions, diverse beliefs, and cultural differences by demonstrating respect for self and others
- Contribute individually and collaboratively to the community as a responsible citizen who exhibits ethical behavior

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and accreditation of public secondary school member institutions, CPSS requires visiting teams to assess the degree to which the evaluated schools align with 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 team, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study, the valid recommendations of the visiting team, and those identified by the Committee in the follow-up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At South Windsor High School, a committee of four members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of South Windsor High School extended over a period of eleven school months from March, 2016 to May, 2017.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, and 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, South Windsor 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 Team

A visiting team of sixteen members was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate South Windsor High School. The visiting team members spent four days in South Windsor, 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 aligns with the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the members of the visiting team represented classroom teachers, guidance counselors, library/media specialists, school administrators, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of South Windsor High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 42 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 32 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

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

This report of the findings of the visiting team will be forwarded to the Committee on Public Secondary Schools which will make a decision on the accreditation of South Windsor High School.

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The South Windsor school community deliberately and purposefully engaged 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 process began during the 2010-2011 school year when a committee of teachers began a formal review of the school's existing core values and beliefs, known as ERICK (Effective Communicator, Responsible Citizen, Information Processor, Collaborative Individual, Knowledgeable Person), and determined that revisions were warranted. The committee was guided by a wealth of research about organizational culture and 21st century learning skills, including many works by Robert Marzano and Richard DuFour, and integrated key research gleaned from *Reframing Organizations* by Lee Boleman, *Our Iceberg is Melting* by John Kotter, *Leading Change in Your School* by Doug Reeves, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, and *Strategy in Action* by Rachel Curtis and Elizabeth City. In addition, the committee reviewed the core values and beliefs from several other schools to gain greater insight as to how best to describe them. Starting with brainstorming sessions with groups of teachers, community members, and students, the committee generated a list of potential core values and beliefs, which were refined and clarified over time. The committee put special emphasis on articulating each core value as concretely as possible, guided by the question, "What does this core value look like in the classroom and in the halls of our school?" The entire process of developing the school's core values and beliefs about learning was intentionally framed by the school community's vision of what a successful South Windsor High School graduate might look like. As a result, the school is already evaluating student success in academic, social, and civic competencies through this lens of the community's vision of a graduate.

The school's mission and vision were shared with stakeholder groups and a final version was formally adopted by the faculty in 2012. In 2013, the school engaged in an additional step of generating a tagline that would succinctly articulate the essence of the school's mission and vision. This tagline, "Dream, Achieve, Inspire," was developed by the student body after a formal process that included brainstorming sessions in English classes, considering proposals, and selecting the final version through a school-wide vote. For the past six years the high school has been a driving force in making the tagline "Dream, Achieve, Inspire" a shared statement across the district.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- parents
- community members
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

After adopting its mission, vision, and tagline, the South Windsor High School community developed a set of challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, civic, and social competencies. Furthermore, the school faculty worked collaboratively to develop, pilot, and revise school-wide analytic rubrics that clearly demonstrate targeted high levels of achievement. These targeted levels of achievement (Exceeding, Meeting, Approaching, and Below Standard) are uniform throughout, allowing little room for confusion by students or staff on expectations for classroom performance.

Each of the school's 21st century learning expectations is assessed through an analytic rubric organized by competency. For example, a single rubric was developed to assess students' achievement of all four of the school's academic expectations. A second rubric is used to evaluate students' achievement of the school's social expectations and, finally, a third rubric is used to measure the school's civic expectations. These three rubrics are made available to staff members, students, and parents on a single, two-sided form. As a result, there is little confusion about each learning expectation or how it is measured. Indeed, 88 percent of students report that they are familiar with the criteria that teachers use to assess assignments and other classwork. Eighty-three percent of South Windsor's faculty and 85 percent of its parents believe that the school's learning expectations are challenging and measurable. In addition, 91 percent of surveyed parents believe they know and understand the level of learning their child is expected to demonstrate to meet the school's learning expectations.

Initial methods of reporting how students were meeting the academic, social, and civic expectations varied between disciplines; individual departments reported student performance on the expectations they determined were specific to their particular discipline. This process was made more consistent and uniform during the 2014-2015 school year through the adoption of a rotating schedule in which each department is assigned to evaluate a specific competency at a certain time during the school year. This schedule ensures that each teacher formally assesses and communicates students' achievement of each of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Because of the collaborative and research-based process used to develop measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, civic, and social competencies and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics, South Windsor High School now has the ability to regularly measure, analyze, and report students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

While South Windsor's vision, mission, tagline, and 21st century learning expectations are actively and genuinely reflected across the school and frequently guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations, they do not yet consistently and explicitly drive the development of the school's curriculum. The core values of intellectual growth, global citizenship, and personal wellness are very well-known and there are many notable examples of the school community's commitment to them. The school's student-of-the-month program, for example, was developed by teachers for the specific purpose of celebrating students who exemplify the school's core values. An extensive program of studies offering a wide variety of learning opportunities and unfettered access to Advanced Placement classes reflects the school's core value of intellectual growth. The recent implementation of an eight-period schedule provides students with greater opportunities to take advantage of elective offerings and more flexibility to fit additional challenging courses into their days. The move to an eight-period schedule required additional staffing to operate, which is further evidence of the school's commitment to academic achievement despite tight budgets. An electronic message sign near the school's counseling offices, the very successful student TV news program, the Career Fair, and the College Fair keep students informed about a wide range of college and career topics. Students' pursuit of intellectual growth is celebrated through the Science Olympiad, the National Honor Society, displays of student work throughout the school, and through a large academic hall of fame, which celebrates South Windsor High School's valedictorians and salutatorians.

The school's emphasis on citizenship is reflected through the many opportunities students have to engage both globally and locally as responsible community members. The school's highly popular Model UN program, the French student exchange program, and school trips abroad give students a vivid sense of the world. The Unified Sports program, the Anti-Bullying Club, and the Unified Theater program, among many others, promote inclusiveness, tolerance, and a greater appreciation of differences. The Community Ambassador Transition Squad (CATS), allows upperclassman to interact with and mentor incoming freshman before their first day of school and beyond.

The senior capstone project, a deep and authentic measure of students' achievement of the school's expectations for student learning, is another notable example. Designed to engage 12th graders in a self-directed and personalized learning experience, the senior capstone project explicitly connects the school's academic, civic, and social learning expectations to topics and ideas that students are passionate about. In addition, the project became a graduation requirement in 2017, further demonstrating the school community's commitment to its mission, vision, and learning expectations.

In addition, as part of an ongoing effort to incorporate restorative justice practices in the school, students serving in-school suspensions or Saturday detentions complete written responses that require them to reflect on their infractions in the context of the school's core values and expectations for student learning and develop personal goals that will help improve behavior and repair relationships that may have been damaged.

While the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations are clearly evident throughout the school's culture and shape many decisions and resource allocations, they are not yet consistently reflected in the school's curriculum in an explicit way. However, there is an implicit incorporation of beliefs about learning and 21st century learning expectations in most classroom lessons and student assignments. Indeed, nearly 74 percent of teachers report that they considered the school's core values and beliefs about learning when making important teaching decisions. Unfortunately, because they are not explicitly embedded into curriculum, teachers cannot ensure that the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations drive their instruction and assessment practices.

Although the core values and beliefs are genuinely reflected in the day-to-day culture of the school, they have yet to play a similar role in driving the development or maintenance of the curriculum, which in turn affects instruction and assessment practices in the classroom. Strategically embedding the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations in all curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices will enhance best practices

instruction and learning for all students in every classroom.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school board
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

South Windsor High School reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, and district and school community priorities. Prior to 2017, this review process was conducted less formally. However, since 2017, the school has followed a clear, more formal, annual plan to review and revise its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. This plan includes the use of regularly scheduled meetings to gather feedback from students, parents, curriculum specialists, and teachers from each department in the school. This feedback provides evidence of how the core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations are used to promote achievement in the classroom, strengthen instructional practices, develop the school's culture, revise the curriculum, build and manage the budget, implement student discipline, and many other topics. The review process also requires the annual review of the school's and the community's priorities to ensure that the current core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations adequately address them. The results of this annual review are shared with the school community and necessary revisions are made to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st-century learning expectations reflect the reality and desired outcomes for the school. Because South Windsor High School engages in an ongoing, thorough, and inclusive process to review and revise its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, the school can ensure that all stakeholders are engaged, informed, and invested in the school's priorities and values and that those values continue to genuinely reflect the school community.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process employed in the development and promotion of the school's core values, beliefs, and expectations for student learning

Commendation

The development and adoption of challenging and measurable analytic rubrics for the learning expectations

Commendation

The senior capstone course, which allows students to connect the school's learning expectations to a topic about which they are passionate in an authentic and purposeful way

Commendation

The existence of school programs, course offerings, and travel opportunities that genuinely promote the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, including the senior capstone project, the Community Ambassador Transition Squad, and the student-of-the-month program

Commendation

The ongoing, thorough, and inclusive process used to review and revise the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations

Commendation

The creation of the school's tagline, "Dream, Achieve, Inspire," by the student body in order succinctly articulate the school's mission and vision

Commendation

The efforts to provide students greater and more varied access to the curriculum through the implementation of an eight-period schedule

Commendation

The explicit use of the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations to encourage student reflection, growth, and restorative justice as part of the school's disciplinary process

Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

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

Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The written and taught curriculum at South Windsor High School is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. Printed copies of the school's expectations are posted in classrooms, appear on the school's website, and are incorporated into many school publications. The overwhelming majority of teachers, students, and parents report that they are aware of these expectations and understand how they are measured. SWHS has assigned each of its departments responsibility for addressing these expectations three times each year according to a rotating reporting cycle. Departments are grouped into sets of three and share primary responsibility for one of the school's three competencies for each quarter of the school year. With each new quarter, department groups shift responsibility to a different competency. For example, English reports on academic expectations in the second quarter, social expectations in the third quarter, and civic expectations in the fourth quarter. As a result, each department focuses on and assesses students' progress in achieving each of the school's 21st century learning expectations in all three competencies. Teachers consistently use school-wide analytic rubrics, which were implemented during the 2014-2015 school year, to measure student achievement of its learning expectations. In addition, students assess their own progress in meeting the school's learning expectations in each of their classes quarterly. Teachers meet with students to discuss their progress and give feedback. Levels of achievement (Exceeding, Meeting, Approaching, or Below Standard) are reported on students' second, third, and fourth quarter report cards.

The curriculum at SWHS aims to foster intellectual curiosity and academic growth at all grade levels. In science classes, students are responsible for crafting their own research questions and showcasing their findings. Teachers routinely ask students to support and justify their claims by writing or explaining the steps they took to answer problems. Students also synthesize information during this process and in other classes across the curriculum. Students in the Advanced Placement Language and Composition courses construct synthesis essays on a variety of topics. An array of courses offer students frequent opportunities to apply and communicate knowledge and skills. Notably, the school's T.V. production program gives students the opportunity to plan, film, and present news and events to the school community. The senior capstone project, which is a graduation requirement, allows students to independently design and execute an authentic and meaningful inquiry-based project that demonstrates their achievement of the school's learning expectations. For example, one student's project focused on the conservation of resources and specifically identified and executed measures to mitigate wasted water in traditional water fountains. Another student wrote, illustrated, and published their own children's book, which they read and discussed in elementary classrooms in the district.

While there is ample evidence that the taught curriculum consistently provides students with opportunities to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations, written curriculum documents do not yet consistently include explicitly articulated connections to the learning expectations. However, teachers and curriculum specialists are engaged in an ongoing process of refining the curriculum to do this as part of their professional learning community (PLC) time. When the written curriculum is designed to explicitly ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations, SWHS students will enjoy continued opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

- parents
- school leadership
- school website

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The written curriculum at South Windsor High School utilizes a common format using the Understanding by Design (UbD) model that includes units of study with essential questions, enduring understandings, knowledge, skills, and learning tasks. However, instructional strategies and assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic or course specific rubrics, are not yet consistently outlined in all curriculum documents. In addition, even though the school has clearly articulated its 21st century learning expectations and these expectations are well known across the school community, they are not yet explicitly embedded into the written curriculum. However, ongoing collaboration to review and revise curriculum documents to consistently include these elements is underway. The consistent inclusion of instructional strategies, assessment practices, and the school's 21st Century learning expectations into the written curriculum will ensure that students have access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum regardless of their teacher.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The SWHS curriculum consistently emphasizes depth of understanding through inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills in most courses, provides many authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school, and supports informed and ethical use of technology. Many classes offer personalized learning activities which provide students with opportunities for challenge appropriate for each individual student's level of readiness. There are a variety of courses, from college prep and honors levels to Advanced Placement, that encourage inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. South Windsor High School students enjoy access to the University of Connecticut Early College Experience (ECE) Program, which enables students to take university courses while still attending high school. These courses, which are taught by South Windsor faculty members who are certified as adjunct professors by UConn faculty, emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking skills. They include Marine Science, Environmental Science, Physics, Latin, and History. In addition, students may participate in a College Career Pathway, which affords students access to applied academics and career skills while earning college credit at Manchester Community College. These courses include Broadcast News Production, Physics, Algebra II w/ Trigonometry, Leadership in Child Care, English, Web Design, Personal Finance, and Video Communication

According to the Endicott Survey, 82 percent of students believe that the content of the courses they take challenges them to think critically and solve problems. Nearly 91 percent of staff agrees that their curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge, and 85 percent of parents believe that their son/daughter is developing problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills. Cross disciplinary learning is evident, especially in the senior capstone project, but not pervasive. Teachers report making some cross-disciplinary connections within their own classes, but only 52.3 percent of the staff agrees that the curriculum emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning.

South Windsor students enjoy varied and rich opportunities to engage in authentic learning. All students are required to complete Project Citizen in civics class, which encourages students to participate directly in the community through volunteering, interviewing citizens regarding an important issue, or getting engaged in the political process. Another notable example of authentic learning is the senior capstone project, which allows students to independently explore topics in a variety of disciplines and requires the authentic application of a wide range of skills and knowledge. In addition, the Early Childhood Education course provides students with opportunities to apply their understanding of childhood development by working directly with preschool students.

South Windsor's curriculum emphasizes the ethical use of technology, and expectations are made clear in the student handbook. Nearly 88 percent of students, 80 percent of staff, and 85 percent of parents agree that the curriculum emphasizes the informed and ethical use of technology. Teachers regularly review the importance of identifying and evaluating credible sources. Students practice note-taking, paraphrasing, properly integrating quotes, and citing sources, and they are expected to consistently apply these skills when conducting research.

Students, through the use of 1:1 Chromebook implementation, demonstrate application of knowledge through technology literacy. This 1:1 device program is continually supported in most classrooms and courses with the support of teachers, technology coaches, administrators, and curriculum specialists. The addition of a Freshman Seminar course provides students with instruction on how to use technology wisely, ethically, and appropriately to meet the school's academic, civic and social responsibilities.

Because of the wide variety of courses offered at SWHS that emphasize higher-order thinking, authentic learning opportunities, and the informed and ethical use of technology, students have multiple opportunities to practice and achieve the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The South Windsor High School faculty uses a multi-faceted approach to ensure that the taught curriculum aligns with the written curriculum. Teachers use formal collaboration time during late-arrival Mondays and in PLC meetings to work within and across departments to discuss how they are delivering the written curriculum within their classrooms. For example, teachers in the English Department have used this time to review curricular goals and determine which reading selections should be taught to best implement the curriculum frameworks. Indeed, the Endicott survey indicates that 85 percent of staff agree there is alignment between the taught and written curriculum.

Late-arrival Mondays are also used to calibrate both common formative and common summative assessments that are directly aligned with the curriculum. Through department determined calibration processes, teachers dissect common assessments and compare student data. Determinations surrounding instructional practices, teaching materials used, individual and group trends in student mastery and overall success of an aspect of the curriculum are made during these meeting times. Additionally, SWHS administrators and curriculum specialists ensure that there is a clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum by regularly visiting classrooms and providing teachers with feedback after observations and evaluations. For example, the assistant principal assigned to the English Department evaluates teachers a minimum of three times per year to ensure, in part, that there is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. This alignment is assessed through meetings between administrators and curriculum specialists to compare evaluations to curriculum documents and pacing guides. The use of formal meetings time during the school day to review and improve teaching practices in light of the written curriculum, along with a strong and collaborative observation process, ensure clear alignment between written and taught curriculum.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

There is effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school, as well as with sending schools in the district. The district has implemented Common Core standards for Connecticut and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). These standards were identified and observed at the heart of instruction in many classrooms visited. For example, an Advanced Placement Chemistry lesson referenced the NGSS within their coursework. Also, to increase the quality and offerings in the STEM area, the school purchased and modified the curriculum Project Lead the Way for their high school students and staff. This curriculum is implemented and aligned through the entire district and is also aligned to the NGSS. Every subject also implements the Understanding by Design (UBD) approach to crafting and creating assessment tasks and student learning outcomes. All curriculum observed used this method as a framework.

Teachers participate in two different types of PLCs: mixed professional learning communities (PLCs) and department specific learning communities. Participation in a content or department-specific PLC takes place on Monday mornings during the late arrival. The mixed PLC consists of teachers from different departments and is used to discuss school-wide initiatives. Teachers report that there are plans to address curriculum across the disciplines in some of these meetings during this school year. It was reported that individual teachers are given time and supports to travel to the sending school to collaborate with teachers for the purpose of aligning the 8th grade transition to 9th grade in regards to curriculum. Each department is assigned a district-wide curriculum specialist. Specialists ensure that the curriculum is consistently implemented and well-articulated across departments and grade levels. Teachers reported that the collegial rapport between curriculum specialists and teaching staff promotes effective conversations focusing on curricular analysis and revision in all departments. Because South Windsor High School's curriculum is aligned between and among departments and grade levels in addition to sending schools, students enjoy guaranteed, consistent, and equitable access to the curriculum.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

South Windsor School High School enjoys adequate staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. The Endicott survey indicates that 96 percent of parents feel their son or daughter has been provided with the materials needed for each class. While the average class size of South Windsor High School is 17.9 students, actual class sizes vary from section to section depending on the subject matter. In several cases, classes are smaller than the 17.9 average, evidence of the adequate staffing levels across the school. For example, it was observed that a section of American Sign Language totaled eight students, a section of 11th grade English totaled thirteen students, and a section of personal finance totaled 11 students.

Over the last four years, South Windsor High School has implemented a 1:1 Chromebook initiative across the entire student body. The integration of this technology is conducted and monitored on a school-wide basis by teachers, building administrators, and curriculum coordinators. Students are provided with current textbooks in classes throughout the Program of Studies. Students have access to internships and shadowing opportunities through their senior capstones and various programs between the school, local businesses, and community colleges.

The Endicott survey indicates that 67 percent of the staff agree that the school's facilities including classrooms, science labs, the library/media center, guidance office, gym, auditorium, and cafeteria fully support the implementation of the curriculum, co-curricular programs, and other learning opportunities. Of special concern are the facilities available to the physical education department and the athletic department, including the gym facilities and outdoor playing fields, which require upgrades in order to fully meet students' needs. Specifically, the school's turf playing field lacks lighting, which significantly limits opportunities for students to practice or host athletic games in the late afternoon and evening in the fall and spring. As a result, the school essentially loses a playing field due to darkness every day, limiting or even preventing some teams from fully participating. The school's soccer field lacks the necessary drainage to keep the surface playable after inclement weather, making it unusable for practice or games for extended amounts of time during the fall and spring. While the Endicott Survey indicates that a large majority of students, parents, and staff report that the school receives adequate funding in regards to curriculum, materials, and resources required for student learning in class, certain limitations to the school's playing fields limit the full delivery of the curriculum and other learning opportunities. When athletic facilities are improved to allow full access to high-quality playing environments, students will enjoy the same high quality learning experiences in physical education and on athletic teams as they do in the classroom.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teachers
- students
- community members
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

The district provides adequate personnel, time, and financial resources for SWHS staff to use data and current research to develop, evaluate, and revise curricula. According to the Endicott survey data, nearly 80 percent of faculty report that they are directly involved with curriculum evaluation, review and revision work. However, only slightly more than half of the faculty report that they have sufficient time to be engaged in formal curriculum evaluation, review and revision. While teachers enjoy formal meeting time during late arrival Mondays and during mixed PLCs, they report that additional time to focus on the review and revision of the curriculum would be very beneficial.

Teachers attend professional development opportunities both inside and outside of the school district to gain new insights, strategies, and tools to revisit, refine, and assess the quality of the curriculum. Curriculum specialists in each course area coordinate curriculum and ensure the vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum across the district. Members of the professional staff are also involved in writing and reviewing curriculum during the summer months.

The school's allocation of resources, including personnel, time, and funding for the review and revision of the curriculum helps to ensure that all students have a variety of opportunities to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The purposeful design of the written and taught curriculum at South Windsor High School to ensure that all students practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The common format for the curriculum using the Understanding by Design (UbD) model that includes units of study with essential questions, enduring understandings, knowledge, skills, and learning tasks

Commendation

The implementation of common meeting and planning time for teachers to collaborate on curriculum review and revision

Commendation

The use of a K-12 Curriculum Specialist in each content area to ensure vertical and horizontal articulation

Commendation

The financial support to maintain adequate supplies and materials

Commendation

The professional development available to teachers both within and outside the district

Commendation

The rich and diverse course offerings in the school

Commendation

The commitment to educating students about media and technology literacy

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a common tuning protocol for common formative assessments and common summative assessments

Recommendation

Ensure that all curriculum documents include instructional strategies and assessment practices that include the use of specific and measurable criteria for success and the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the school's playing fields adequately support athletic activities

Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

South Windsor's departmental professional learning communities (PLCs) are given formal collaboration time during Monday late-arrivals for teachers to design and reflect on lessons to ensure consistency with the school's academic, civic and social expectations. For example, many teachers have used this time to develop ungraded formative assessments to encourage students to take risks and learn from their mistakes. This practice is aligned with the high value South Windsor High School places on intellectual growth and resilience. When discussing summative assessments, the English department recognized they were focused on process over skill development. To better align with the school's student learning expectations, they used PLC time to develop formative assessments to address this need. During their late arrival Monday PLC, Algebra I teachers recognized that students' academic growth - one of their academic expectations - was being hindered because they were not retaining the skills learned in Chapter 1. Together they created and continued to evaluate spiral review activities for the students to practice these skills throughout the week. There is also opportunity for teachers to engage in instructional rounds to observe how their colleagues' instructional practices align with the school's core values and learning expectations. These instructional rounds lead to discussions of best practices and help ensure that student learning experiences are authentic and reflect the culture of the school.

Teachers are clearly familiar with the schools' identified expectations for learning. They work directly with students to discuss progress in the academic, social, and civic expectations outlined within their classrooms and throughout the school building at least once each marking period. Teachers also create comprehensive lesson plans (or learning experience plans) as part of their formal observations, which provides a chance for them to formally highlight the relationships between the social and civic expectations into their lessons. While these social and civic expectations are clearly identified on these formal lesson plans, the evidence does not suggest that there is a purposeful or explicit inclusion of these expectations in most unit planning activities. This may explain why 63.6 percent of the faculty agree that they are continually examining their instructional practices to ensure consistency with their core values and beliefs. Regardless, in discussions with both teachers and students, there was clear consensus that the core academic, social and civic expectations are part of the everyday experience at South Windsor High School. Because teachers consistently examine their instructional practices to ensure alignment with the school's core values and 21st century learning expectations, students are provided with a wide range of rich learning opportunities that support South Windsor High School's mission of cultivating intellectual growth, global citizenship, and personal wellness.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

While teachers at South Windsor High School consistently engage students in active and self-directed learning that emphasizes problem-solving, higher-order thinking, the application of knowledge, and integrating technology, they do not yet consistently personalize instruction or engage in inquiry or cross-disciplinary learning.

There is a general commitment to engaging all students in learning tasks that are appropriately rigorous, and it is clear that students are regularly engaged in problem-solving and higher-order thinking. Approximately 80 percent of staff and parents agree that teachers emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, the creation of models to explain phenomena in science, pulling together different sources from databases and synthesizing information through research projects (e.g., superhero research project in English), creating presentations using a variety of media (such as in 9th grade seminar), building, testing, and troubleshooting computer code, challenging students to explicitly explain the thinking behind mathematical problem-solving, and analyzing economic trends related to supply and demand. These types of learning tasks are usually student-directed and result in a high level of student engagement. However, even though these and other similarly-rigorous activities are common, they are not pervasive. While certain lessons don't lend themselves to higher-order thinking and there can be value to direct instruction, there is still a considerable amount of teacher-directed learning present. Classroom observations and conversations with students suggest that there are times when students are allowed to be passive observers in a room rather than active learners. This is particularly evident because it is so contrary to the challenging and dynamic lessons noted previously.

Students apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, particularly in elective courses. In childcare, students design and implement developmentally appropriate lesson plans for preschool children. Similarly authentic experiences occur in journalism. In addition, in the broadcast journalism class, students prepare news packages that are sent to Fox 61 who has aired some on their local broadcast. For students interested in choreography and dance, they have the opportunity to choreograph and perform their own dance routines using skills learned in the physical education course. Many world language teachers provide their students with immersion experiences, communicating solely in students' non-native languages. In an American Sign Language class, students had to use different sets of communication tools other than their voice to communicate their thoughts to experience what it was like to be deaf.

The integration of technology is a clear strength of SWHS. Students have a 1:1 ratio with chromebooks and teachers actively use this resource in a variety of ways including Google Classroom to post and submit assignments and provide links to resources such as primary sources and the Gale research database. Teachers have also used flipped classrooms, PhET applets, Pear Deck and Noodletools. Students use EdPuzzle in world language classes and Screencastify is used for student presentations (allowing students to narrate, annotate and revise their final visual product) and as a tool for teachers to provide feedback to students. Teachers use the technology available to them to reach the diverse learning needs of many students through differentiation of lessons. Auditory enhancements are found in all classrooms. There is a great support for the teachers to enhance the integration of technology from the tech support teacher. Some teachers are participants in a technology committee called Innovators in the Classroom where they discuss and share information about different computer applications that may be beneficial to the instructional process.

Teachers engage students by utilizing a variety of self-assessment techniques, including the dialogue and perspective that accompanies peer editing, test review activities, self-correcting formative assessments, and the use of rubrics and journals. Seventy-one percent of teachers report using self-assessments and reflections as part of their lesson planning. In chemistry, for example, students score and discuss each other's tests as a means of addressing their own misunderstandings through self-reflection. English and social studies classes commonly use peer-editing and self-assessment in writing assignments. There is widespread use of discipline-specific rubrics for self-assessment before students submit final products. This is also consistent with the self-measuring of student achievement on the school-wide academic, civic, and social expectations. Students reflect on their own personal achievement and spend time individually discussing their conclusions with each of their teachers. This leads to meaningful conversations between students and teachers about core values, enhancing

the students' self-directed learning experience.

Although some teachers have found effective ways of personalizing instruction, it is not a common occurrence in regular education, in part due to constraints on instructional time. For example, the world language department does allow for personalized learning particularly with their rubrics. Students are able to create their own rubrics to serve as guides as they progress towards mastery of different aspects of content. In addition, one of the most essential components of the new freshman seminar class is the creation of personal learning goals that students are challenged to master and then revise. CWE is personalized based on career choices. Teachers do personalize instruction based on IEP and 504 recommendations, but often do not go beyond these strategies to personalize instruction for all learners in their classroom. Overall, the Endicott survey results may also suggest this is an area for potential growth, where 65.8 percent of teachers agree they use a variety of skills to create a personalized classroom for instruction and lesson but 26.7 percent of teachers are undecided.

Students occasionally complete projects that emphasize true inquiry. At this time, this may be more applicable to certain content areas (e.g., science and social studies) than others. The science department has incorporated more inquiry, for example, investigations based on phenomena, as part of the adoption of the NGSS. Social studies PLCs are actively working to teach through inquiry. Inquiry is also seen in the 12thgrade capstone project and in a final unit assessment of a 9thgrade College Prep class in which students were asked to write an essay as if a current societal concern (of their own choice) was never addressed. The Science Olympiad course allows students to explore a competitive aspect of different fields of science and STEM. Students, either in groups or individually, choose topics they wished to explore and create. While these examples of inquiry are commendable, inquiry does not seem to be used uniformly throughout the school. Teachers are working towards including more of these types of assignments throughout all curricular experiences.

There is evidence of cross-disciplinary learning in the school, although in most cases it does not seem to be the result of coordination between departments. One example of cross-disciplinary work involves the teacher-librarian and the English and social studies departments and addresses research skill development. Not only does the teacher-librarian go into classrooms, but she also co-assesses the work that students complete. This is only the third year of this work; the goal is to spread and share these skills throughout the school over time. In addition to this work, there is evidence of students making cross-curricular connections in the Science Olympiad college prep course (as students use a variety of STEM skills to solve problems) and on some research papers (for example, students investigating the social justice issues of a decade and writing an English paper connecting the history with well-known superheroes). Students are also encouraged to find their own cross-curricular connections in the different disciplines. In one instance, students were listening to a piece from the Baroque era and were pressed to make connections with what they had learned in their history classes to further their appreciation of the music. School-wide, there is scheduled mixed-discipline PLC time given to teachers twice a week. The mixed-discipline PLCs allow for valuable cross-curricular conversations to occur, but they have not resulted in many consciously-planned lessons coordinated by teachers from different disciplines. Because teachers at South Windsor High School consistently engage students in active and self-directed learning that emphasizes inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking and the application of knowledge, students enjoy ample opportunities to achieve 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

There are many dynamic examples of teachers adjusting their instructional practices by using formative assessments, strategically differentiating, purposefully organizing group learning activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom, although these instructional practices are not consistently applied across the school.

Formative assessments are a cornerstone of teacher discussion in the PLC meetings as a means of improving instruction and student learning experiences. Ninety-two percent of teachers report using formative assessments in order to aid students in their acquisition of knowledge. English teachers have created a series of formative assessments in their PLC time to prepare students for the skills necessary to succeed on a final unit summative assessment. Teachers use Google Forms, for example, as either entrance or exit tickets to determine student understanding. A graphing assessment common amongst the biology teachers establishes a baseline for students (and serves as a vehicle for self-reflection). Individual teachers have found other classroom routines (e.g., having students use colors to denote levels of confidence) that allow students to monitor their own understanding, self-identify when they are struggling, and provide immediate feedback to their teacher so that they can close the gap between where they are and the goals of the lesson. Overall, the results of formative assessments seem to drive daily instruction and also help to guide future lesson plans, although teachers are aware that they could use formative assessment in a more consistent manner across all disciplines. In particular, the results of formative assessments are not yet being used to adjust the pacing of units that are currently being taught.

Many teachers actively try to differentiate to where their students shine, but this differentiation is not seen across all classes. Technology has been used to help differentiate, most notably with the use of Google Classroom and co-taught classes where the special education teacher can individually modify posted assignments according to certain students' needs. Google Classroom also allows for teachers to differentiate assignments (for example, assigning students different phenomena to investigate) based on student learning needs. Differentiation also occurs in the reading strategies employed by a variety of teachers. Teachers modify the reading level of documents to allow all students to access the text. While differentiation is clearly present (79.9 percent of teachers report that they use differentiated instruction), there is still some inconsistency in its application school-wide. There is a concerted attempt to increase differentiation, as is evidenced by the focus on SRBI Tier One intervention strategies the staff has embarked on this year. The SRBI team plans to track individual students' achievements to find out if successful strategies in one class translate to other classes.

Teachers extensively use purposefully organized group learning activities to enhance their instruction. Seventy-eight percent of staff believe that teachers use group learning as part of their instructional process. While there are many methods used to devise groups, they are often based on the specific needs of projects and created in the best interest of students. These methods include student-choice, ability level, and performance on entrance/exit tickets. In marketing, the teacher uses a learning inventory survey to guide her decisions in making groups. Often, the physical layout of the classroom itself (e.g., groupings of student desks) is catered to instructional goals. These grouping strategies were consistently observed throughout the student shadowing experiences.

Teachers routinely provide additional support for students, from personal one-on-one instruction in the classroom to extensive after-school opportunities for extra help. Throughout the visit, all students commended the teachers on their accessibility when they needed help. There was also clear evidence of very strong rapport between students and teachers across disciplines and classes. There are also co-taught classes, although budget cuts removed some of these in the past few years. Teachers are also fully aware of the modifications that students with 504's and IEPs need, and they work with special education teachers and support staff to implement these strategies. This is clearly evident in the fact that 84 percent of parents agree that teachers provide additional support when their children need it. The ability of teachers to adjust their practices to meet the needs of their students allows students to successfully access the curriculum and have meaningful learning experiences.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices extensively through the use of student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, the examination of student work, the use of feedback from a variety of sources, the examination of current research, and by engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice.

Teachers often use student achievement data in their PLCs to highlight their instructional strengths and weaknesses. They use this information to focus on skills that students are struggling with and make changes to their instructional focus and practices. Data has also been used in cross-curricular discussions, particularly when it involves student placement in more advanced classes such as chemistry (where skills learned in algebra II with trigonometry are necessary). This was also evident in the work of the English and math PLCs as they used student data to focus more on the development of particular skills in preparation for final summative assessments. Although this is a strength, only 74 percent of teachers believe they have formal opportunities to examine student work, so they would like to see more time allocated for this pursuit.

Student feedback is important to many teachers in improving their instructional practices. While teachers are not required to solicit student feedback on their instruction, many teachers ask for feedback through conversations and Google forms. This formal feedback occurs throughout the year, typically as students reflect on recent units of study. Some students recognize that many teachers are willing to be flexible (e.g., with assignment due dates, rephrasing instructions, etc.) and to provide extra help. Due to the mutual respect and trust between teachers and students, students feel comfortable providing a great deal of informal conversational feedback to teachers.

Formative assessments, such as electronic exit slips, can lead to conversations that become the basis of revising instructional practices to meet the needs of all students. In a social studies class, the teacher recognized through Kahoot questions and the resulting discussion that her students were still struggling with many of the themes of the Progressive Era. She adjusted her scheduled plans and created an interactive project where students would engage the themes in a more creative visual manner to meet the needs of some of her struggling learners. The teacher-librarian uses Pear Deck to check for student understanding in a particular research skill before she moves on to the next topic. If students seem to be unclear, she goes back and reteaches the skill.

Teachers occasionally receive feedback from parents on a student-by-student basis. Teachers hope to integrate more parental feedback in their planning, but as part of a system that provides feedback representative of their entire student roster (since most individual parent feedback now tends to involve concerns that they have). However, the school is making a concerted effort to bring more positive parent observations to the teachers. This process includes asking parents to email teachers of their positive impact during teacher appreciation week.

Teachers also engage in discourse when examining current research. This is evident in their use of the Understanding by Design educational planning approach. They discuss the desired outcomes for student achievement in order to design curriculum units, performance assessments, and classroom instruction. In their discourse, they also focus on teaching to achieve understanding by looking at material from a variety of perspectives to give a deeper appreciation and understanding of the material being presented. It has changed the manner in which many of the teachers follow their curriculum. Department members can bring research ideas from their own graduate work and individual professional development to meetings to discuss. Curriculum specialists encourage their contributions and provide their own research-based training (for example, questioning techniques in the Business and Finance Technology department). In addition to PLC and department time, teachers often informally discuss methods and research throughout the day. This often occurs at lunch, in the hallways, and prior to after-school activities. It is clear that teachers examine current research and engage in professional discourse, but the implementation of this research and the impact of professional discourse is inconsistent. Due to teachers' dedication to improving their instructional practices, their students have many more opportunities to experience academic growth.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

A vast majority of teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. They have a great deal of access to relevant, discipline-specific professional development both in and out of school. In-school training occurs during four identified professional development days. Faculty survey results are used to identify areas of focus. Typically, some portion of this professional development time is reserved for department activities and other portions for activities chosen by individual teachers. This flexibility allows them to customize their learning and focus on their content area. Examples of learning opportunities for teachers include guest speakers from Manchester Community College and attending conferences by associations such as ATOMIC (Connecticut association of math teachers), the National Association of Biology Teachers, and the Connecticut chapter of the National Writing Project. In addition, many faculty members are actively engaged in graduate work related to reading interventions and curriculum. Monday morning PLC time and department meetings provide time for teachers to share their learning with their departments and to incorporate this learning into the curriculum. For example, the English department reviewed their list of titles associated with each course after teachers attended a seminar on the values of African American literature.

South Windsor's K-12 curriculum specialists help plan and support content-specific professional development and are knowledgeable about current research and best-practices. They keep up-to-date on relevant content-related professional development offerings and encourage teachers to take advantage of these opportunities. The curriculum specialists are also actively involved in South Windsor High School's Monday disciplinary PLC meetings and run after-school department meetings. During these times they work to ensure teachers have knowledge of best-practices in their content area. For example, the K-12 science curriculum specialist has provided training on 3-D instructional strategies that align with the Next Generation Science Standards. Overall, teachers at SWHS maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices, which ensures that students have access to quality pedagogy and accurate, relevant information.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The use of a wide variety of instructional strategies based on best-practices

Commendation

The utilization of professional learning community time to improve instructional practices through collaboration and by effectively using student achievement data

Commendation

The school-wide integration of technology to enhance instruction and student learning

Commendation

Access to relevant, discipline-specific professional development both in and out of school

Commendation

The use of self-reflection, formative assessments, and student-directed learning to meet students where they are and involve them in the learning process

Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Clearly articulate the relevant academic, civic, and social expectations before each unit of study

Recommendation

Ensure high levels of student engagement across all classes

Recommendation

Find opportunities for relevant cross-curricular lessons planned formally by teachers from different disciplines

Recommendation

Use formative assessments consistently across all disciplines to address identified needs by adjusting instruction and pacing

Recommendation

Ensure that there is a wide range of inquiry-based learning activities throughout the school

Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff at South Windsor High School has implemented a formal, ongoing process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytic rubrics. South Windsor staff members were all involved in the development of the vision, mission and 21st century learning expectations several years ago, and this guiding document is evident throughout the building.

With respect to effective use of this tool and process, students self-assess their performance on the academic, social, and civic expectations at the end of the second, third and fourth quarters. Each teacher also provides a rating for their students using the school-wide academic, social, and civic expectations rubric. In addition, seniors use the learning expectations as a central element of their capstone project, which makes the experience more relevant and embedded. Teacher ratings are shared with students and accessible by families through the PowerSchool online grading portal. This frequency of assessment, while providing formative opportunities to discuss areas of need with teachers, is more summative in nature due to the infrequency of use.

During classroom visits, school-wide analytic rubrics were in use and referenced by several teachers. It was evident from the review of student work samples that related national and state standards were linked to the lesson, as were the school-wide academic, social and civic expectations as appropriate for some of the assignments. However, use of the school-wide rubric seems to be inconsistent throughout the school. When students were asked about how meaningful this assessment is to them, they candidly shared that they aren't very motivated by the scores they receive. They were especially forthcoming in stating that they are more concerned with their own reflection on this instrument and their self-reflection than they are with the teacher ratings. While they openly admitted being motivated by academic grades, they stated that the school-wide expectations served the purpose as more of a reminder about what they should strive for in school and in life. Further, several students agreed that their parents didn't really understand what these grades represented, if they even accessed them in PowerSchool.

With respect to reporting out on aggregate data from the school-wide rubrics, it is clear from conversations with school staff and administration that this data exploration and reporting from a school-wide perspective simply isn't done at this time. This was reinforced by the assessment co-chairs in their summation that this is an important next step for making school-wide learning expectations increasingly meaningful and integrated into school assessments and reporting practices.

Because the professional staff has a formal process for assessing whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, there are clear guiding targets for students to work toward and well understood core values and learning expectations evident throughout the school.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- school leadership

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

South Windsor High School's professional staff effectively communicates individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families. It is evident through the South Windsor High School vision, mission and expectations for student learning documents that a thoughtful process was developed to ensure each department reports on student progress during the school year using the adopted analytic rubric. This qualitative rubric provides opportunities for teacher feedback and student self-reflection aimed at continuous growth and improvement. Reporting cycles are clearly structured so that every department evaluates each student on the academic, social and civic expectations for student learning that are reported to students and stakeholders using a school-wide rubric at the close of each of the last three school marking periods. As a result, clear expectations for student learning are embedded in the learning community and widely understood by students and staff in pursuit of continuous improvement.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The school's professional staff has begun a process to collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. South Windsor High School faculty members effectively use the professional learning community process to develop and align curriculum, share instructional practices, and design common formative and summative assessments in many departments across the school. Common midterms and finals have been crafted in several departments and these common benchmarks guide the pacing of instruction across common courses. Student data from these assessments is collected and in many cases, feedback is provided to students by which they can adjust and improve their understanding on subsequent assessments. In some courses and departments, students are allowed to retake an assessment (or the portion of the assessment they didn't do well on) for an improved grade. In some world language classes, it was explained that students help to create the project-based rubric, self-rate their performance and receive feedback from the teacher by which they can make improvements. These opportunities were apparent in other courses as well, including in the arts and elective courses where a growth mindset for learning was evident.

According to the self study and as observed during the school visit, many courses continue to need some improvement in the use of data for informing reteaching practices and improving subsequent learning opportunities. Inequities in achievement are in some cases not addressed in a differentiated manner that raises student achievement. This may be in part due to a feeling that teachers must keep up with the pace of the course curriculum in preparation for common exams; however, student remediation may be lost in the process. Because the professional staff collects, disaggregates, and analyzes formative and summative student data, teachers have a clear understanding of student needs and are able to provide aligned supports.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teachers
- students

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

South Windsor High School teachers recognize the need for effective communications with students concerning the relevant 21st century learning expectations as they relate to content and unit-specific goals being assessed. Occasionally this communication takes place in a syllabus or overview; however, it is mostly implicit in the classroom instruction, and not addressed by all teachers. Teachers continue to discuss strategies for improving communications and integration of the school's learning expectations into rubrics and unit plans. A greater emphasis and collaboration would be desirable for teachers to improve the school's communication of expectations to students and parents.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- school support staff

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, teachers frequently provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as corresponding rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement. It is consistently evident that teachers are very transparent with their students in sharing and explaining the important elements for all summative assessments and projects. South Windsor High School has effectively employed project-based rubrics to provide detailed success criteria. Eighty percent of students agreed that their teachers use clear criteria, such as rubrics, to assess their work, and only 5.7 percent of students disagreed. Seventy-four percent of students express an understanding of the criteria or rubrics used by teachers, and 75 percent of students indicated that they understand in advance what work they have to accomplish to meet their teachers' expectations.

In some instances, these rubrics are co-developed with student input, such as in world language classes, where an outline or shell is provided and then students are tasked to assist in filling in the rubric shell with meaningful criteria. This provides an excellent opportunity for students to own their learning and truly understand what is important for success.

Every class has a written curriculum that includes rubrics and other criteria for assessment of student learning. Common summative assessments have been created by departmental professional learning communities and are utilized in the classroom. Ninety-four percent of students agree that teachers provide students with the corresponding rubric in advance of work that needs to be accomplished to meet teachers' expectations. This is a significant indicator that student perception aligns with staff efforts to provide clear guidance of learning expectations. It was, however, noted in meetings with leaders, teachers and students that the school-wide learning expectations are not explicitly embedded in lessons and shared with students as expected outcomes.

Because students frequently and consistently receive clear success criteria prior to summative assessments and large projects, they have a deeper understanding of expected performance levels and an opportunity to gauge progress against such criteria.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Teachers employ a range of assessment strategies in each unit of study, including formative and summative assessment. Formative assessments are frequently conducted from observations of student engagement, checking for understanding using socratic questioning strategies that invoke independent thinking, and exit tickets that demonstrate application of learning outcomes. Art instruction, for example, purposefully and consistently measures learning in stages of completion for tangible products, such as pinch clay pots that reflect beginning, intermediate, and advanced skill sets. Culinary students create salads from scratch using kitchen tools and recipes under the supervision of their teacher who interacts with them and checks their understanding.

Other content areas across the curriculum employ techniques including self-assessment and peer reviews that contribute to formative assessment of student work. Summative assessments, while less frequent than formative, consistently measure defined unit learning goals using paper tests, quizzes, project-based assignments, with many having rubrics. In programming, students code video games using Basic language beginning with instructor modeling for students to duplicate. Once a desired coding outcome is achieved, more challenging assignments with rubrics guide students through higher-order thinking challenges. In Advanced Placement Calculus, students not only demonstrate their ability to accurately determine volume and surface areas, but also create a tangible product that represents this ability (e.g., building a gingerbread house based on prescribed volume and width to minimize surface area). The many assessment strategies utilized by South Windsor High School teachers promote active learning classrooms and exceptional student performance.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student work
- teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Teachers consistently and regularly collaborate in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revisions of formative and summative assessment, including common assessments. Eighty-five percent of teachers agree that teachers meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies. Regularly scheduled departmental PLC meetings provide faculty with many opportunities to discuss various assessments. Departmental teams meet formally on average three Mondays per month for over an hour (7:05-8:15) prior to the bell for reporting to classes. During these meetings, teachers discuss, adjust, and plan future assessments based on general trends and past student performance. Discussion is also centered, to a lesser degree, around current student needs and shifts needed to address those needs. Common formative and summative assessments were created and are sometimes refined as needed during this valued meeting period, allowing for increased continuity.

In addition to these formal meetings, teachers reportedly collaborate informally during shared duties, common planning times (intradepartmental), common PLC time, during lunch, before and after school, and between classes. These informal collaboration opportunities provide different perspectives on shared needs and improve teacher practice and as a result, positively impact student outcomes. Some departments also refer to national and state standards to align their assessments with revised curriculum. Teachers at the school consistently seek out new and more effective ways to assess student performance with a wide range of assessment strategies, which supports the school's philosophy about providing differentiated opportunities to demonstrate learning.

Because South Windsor High School teachers effectively and meaningfully collaborate on the creation, analysis, and revisions of formative and summative assessment, students are afforded valuable and aligned opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Teachers at South Windsor High School provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. By scaffolding larger assignments into smaller steps, providing feedback, rubrics, and using graphic organizers, students are more able to realize successful outcomes. The faculty is available for assistance or clarification, which provides effective communication for students to revise and improve their work. Some departments permit retakes of assessments and assign alternative assignments that have the same level of rigor and relevance. For example, in marketing, a student was permitted to orally re-explain certain components of a project presentation to the teacher in a manner that improved the quality of their original work. Other departments, however, do not permit students to retake summative assessments such as quizzes or tests. Because the faculty provides specific, timely, and corrective feedback to students, students know what they have mastered and what could be improved. When all faculty members allow students additional opportunities to demonstrate mastery across their curricula, student performance will improve.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teachers

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers frequently use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. Ninety-two percent of teachers report they use some form of formative assessment and 65.4 percent of teachers use a common formative assessment at least once in each unit to guide instruction. Based on classroom visits and discussion with students and teachers, there was significant evidence that teachers employ a variety of methods to check for student understanding, including collaborative discussions, regular recordings, common formative assessments, exit slips, student self-reflection, practice problems, and short application practice. Technology applications such as shared Google documents provide a meaningful platform for feedback and also allow for differentiated support and assistance based on individual student strengths and needs. Other programs such as Screencastify are utilized for the purpose of sharing feedback with students and guiding learning. Common formative assessments and teacher created assessments are used in several departments to guide learning.

Eighty nine percent of teachers agreed with the statement, "Teachers improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments." The music department uses recordings along with rubrics to check student understanding and provide students with an opportunity to self-reflect. Spanish teachers use rubrics on assessments that allow students to self-reflect when the assessment is completed. The math department uses common formative assessments to check student understanding. The results of these assessments inform teachers about their students' progress and allow them to adapt short and long-term plans to include re-teaching, revisiting skills and information, and otherwise adjusting the course curriculum to meet students' needs.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, continuously examine a range of student learning evidence for the purpose of revising curriculum and instructional practices during their weekly professional learning community meetings (PLCs). During this time, teachers conduct reviews of common assessments and discuss needed changes to the curriculum. The PLC time also allows for collaborative design and evaluation of midterm and final exams and unit assessments. In addition to PLC time, a focused collaboration among teachers is enhanced by having students arrive one-hour late on Mondays of each week, excluding the first Monday of any month, so that teachers can examine student work and their instructional practices. Teachers actively explore strategies to infuse school-wide learning expectations into classroom learning, such as how to best communicate connections between academic, social, and civic learning expectations to the learning community. The faculty is committed to assessing survey data collected from students and parents to improve instructional practices; however, this is an ongoing process and is not yet reflected in the school's quarterly reported learning expectations. Because faculty and administrators examine a range of student learning evidence, they can use this evidence to inform their curriculum and instructional practices.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The school's grading and reporting practices are, in some areas, regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

Teachers meet in departmental professional learning communities on Monday mornings (three Mondays per month) to discuss changes and improvements to the curriculum. During this time, teachers in each department edit and revise curriculum documents to ensure that all courses' curricula relate to the 21st-century learning expectations. Although there is limited or inconsistent evidence that individual assessments are consistently aligned to expectations for student learning, many of the 21st-century learning expectations are naturally included in assignment rubrics across disciplines, even if they are not specifically listed in the language. Curriculum specialists collaborate to make periodic and regular shifts to curriculum and related assessments based on shifts in state standards. An example of this is the ongoing revisions to better align South Windsor curriculum to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

Senior capstone projects are integrally aligned and linked to the academic, social and civic learning expectations and bring the core values of South Windsor High School to life. The capstone requirement will increase the perceived importance of the school-wide learning expectations for students and stakeholders throughout their high school experience. Further, social and civic expectations are embedded within multiple areas of the school community and curricula. While references to the core values and related learning expectations may not be as explicit as they could be, it is clear that they are integrally woven into the fiber of the school culture in meaningful and well understood ways. Clear linkage is evident between the core values and school practices and beliefs, both within and outside of the school community.

Fifty-nine percent of the staff believe that school-wide grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised, though no formal review of grading practices takes place beyond regular curriculum revision. Seventy-nine percent of parents believe that teachers' grading practices are aligned with the school's beliefs about learning. These data points support that there has been meaningful work in this area but room for further growth that could come from moderate shifts in practice.

Because of South Windsor High School's review and revision of grading practices, assessments align with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The opportunity for students to self-reflect on their achievement of the school's learning expectations

Commendation

The effective use of the school's learning expectations to inform lesson design, instruction, and assessment practices

Commendation

The opportunities students have to demonstrate achievement of the school's learning expectations through the senior capstone project

Commendation

The use of the school's student information management system, PowerSchool, to communicate individual student achievement of the school's learning expectation three times each year

Commendation

The use of professional learning communities to share and review assessment practices

Commendation

Teachers' regular use of school-wide and lesson-specific rubrics to clearly articulate criteria for success

Commendation

The effective use of technology to provide formative feedback to students

Commendation

The collaborative development of common assessments in many departments and courses

Commendation

The regular review of formative, summative, and standardized assessment data to inform instructional needs

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Communicate to students the applicable school-wide learning expectations for each unit

Recommendation

Ensure learners have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning, receive corrective feedback, and use this feedback in meaningful ways to support their learning

Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

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 the majority of the student body. From the moment students walk into the inviting main lobby, they are surrounded by a culture that is purposefully designed to nurture the whole child. The school proudly displays the accomplishments of current and former students, including the Hall of Achievement, as well as multiple trophies and plaques that celebrate athletics, academics, and the arts. The school's core values are prominently displayed in the main lobby, as well as every office and classroom. School safety officers, as well the school resource officer, get to know the students well and often serve as a liaison to administration, the social worker, school counselors, and school psychologists. Teachers believe that the school safety officers are used to nurture the whole child; specifically, teachers uniformly feel that the safety officers effectively help students feel safe emotionally and physically within the school environment. Security cameras placed throughout the school grounds and parking lots are monitored during the school day to further ensure a safe environment as does the entry system, requiring an electronic swipe or buzzer entry. Each student receives a handbook outlining the school's code of conduct, also available on the school's website.

South Windsor High School implements a range of restorative justice practices to address unwanted behaviors. The most informal of these practices is the use of affective statements and questions by teachers, counselors, safety officers to prompt meaningful student reflection about behaviors and their impact on others. These conversations not only set high standards for student conduct, but also provide opportunities for students to better understand why certain behaviors are negative. In addition, informal, impromptu conferences are held as needed to address the small negative incidents that may occur in school. These small conferences help to address problems before they escalate and engage students in the resolution. Students are able to express their perspectives and think about the impact of their behavior. In certain circumstances, conflicts between students are resolved through more formal restorative conferences where all parties engage in the mediation of issues. Since implementing restorative practices, negative student behaviors have declined significantly and as a direct result of this decline, the school's need to suspend students has decreased over the past five years.

Faculty members show support of their students in myriad ways from attending school events such as the school play, show choir concerts, and athletic events, to advising a robust list of extracurricular activities that reflect student interests. The school's 2017-2021 improvement plan includes a goal to establish a positive and supportive school culture that addresses the social and emotional needs of students.

Starting with a student's first year, he or she will be welcomed and supported by the Community Ambassadors Transition Squad (CATS), and enrolled in a freshman seminar that focuses on study skills, organization, time management and how to utilize Google Apps. GoGuardian is utilized to keep students safe while working on Chromebooks by monitoring their online activity. These programs introduce and put into practice the school's social, civic and academic expectations. Students take ownership as valuable members of the school community through a wide range of special interest clubs including Gay Straight Alliance, East Asian Club, Diversity Club, Cooking Club, Unified Sports, Unified Theatre, and Paint for Positivity Club, as well as athletic teams and extensive opportunities in the musical, visual and dramatic arts. Other opportunities to show school spirit include Bobcat Pride (students responsible for planning and orchestrating dances, spirit weeks and pep rallies) and the Rowd Crowd (a fan section at sporting events). Some students are selected to be representative to the principal's advisory committee, which meets monthly to address student concerns.

The senior capstone project plays a significant role in developing and recognizing the intellectual growth of twelfth grade students, offering them an opportunity to demonstrate skills they have learned and personalized over their high school years. This project provides a culminating opportunity to take ownership of and direct their own learning under the guidance of a faculty advisor.

The school counseling department plays a role in ensuring a school culture that is supportive and fosters student responsibility for learning and decision-making. Students are expected to take an active role in course scheduling, building their own schedule in PowerSchool, based on individual interests and teacher

recommendations, prior to meeting with counselors. The counseling department holds a welcome breakfast for students who are new to the district. Counselors also meet with students in groups before exam time, and provide targeted lessons in grades 9-12. The building's support staff works closely with faculty to best meet the needs of students with social-emotional challenges. Effective School Solutions, as well as the Alternate School (ALT School) cater to the needs of students with psychiatric concerns, including school avoidance. Due to the efforts of the school community to build a safe, positive, and respectful culture, students, faculty, and staff share a clear and evident sense of pride and ownership.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- school support staff

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school is largely equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for most students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Students at the school are placed in core courses at the appropriate level of challenge, as recommended by their teachers. However, students and their families may challenge a teacher's level recommendation, opting for a more challenging academic experience.

A wide range of heterogeneous electives allow many, but not all students to pursue interests without concern for weighted grades. Unified Sports and Unified Theatre provide authentic opportunities for regular and special education students to interact. The school's 2017-2021 improvement plan includes a goal to develop culturally responsive strategies by developing student leaders who represent diverse experiences and backgrounds. Eighty-three percent of students feel that they have a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels of ability are enrolled. In contrast, only 66.7 percent of teachers feel that the school is equitable and inclusive, which may reflect something of a segmentation of the school population dependent on courses taught. Some students feel that the school community judges students for who they are regardless of race while others expressed feelings that the school's efforts to address racial tolerance and inequity do not adequately address the needs of the increasingly diverse student body. Because of the growing diversity in the community, when efforts to ensure equity are increased it will ensure the needs of all students are met.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

There are numerous ongoing program(s) or process(es) through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. A few formal programs exist that provide an opportunity to form relationships with an adult in the building. All 9th grade students are enrolled in a newly implemented freshman seminar, focusing on study skills, organization, and learning to utilize Google Apps. All students are placed in a homeroom that meets each morning for eight minutes (sometimes extended); most students stay with same teacher all four years. Students select a teacher advisor for their senior capstone project. No comparable formal experience connecting teachers to students exists in grades 10-11. Throughout a student's four years, most develop relationships with teachers and coaches through a wide range of clubs, athletics, fine arts, and extracurricular activities. Many teachers serve as advisor to multiple clubs, as athletic coaches, or as informal mentors. Some parents and students report that they would be more likely to go to a teacher or coach than their school counselor for social/emotional needs. Faculty and staff appear open to stepping outside of their formally designated roles. According to parents and students, counselors tend mostly to course selection, scheduling, and college planning. As noted in the Endicott survey, only 44 percent of students feel that SWHS has a program which provides them with an adult in the building with whom they meet regularly and who knows them well. On the other hand, 56.7 percent of students feel that there is an adult in the school who knows them well and regularly helps them succeed, highlighting the importance of the strong, informal student/teacher relationships throughout the building. The countless formal and informal opportunities for students and adults to forge relationships in the building directly impact a student's abilities to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff systematically offer opportunities for and engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning; utilize resources outside of the school to maintain currency with best practices; dedicate formal time to implement professional development; and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction and assessment. Sixty-five percent of teachers agree that the school's professional development programs enable them to acquire and use skills to improve their instruction and assessment. However, while most teachers agree that it is aligned, support staff feels that their professional development is not always specific to their content area. According to building leadership, the PDEC committee, which includes representation from the high school, surveys staff regarding their needs for upcoming school-wide PD. Three district-wide professional development days generally allow some time for individual teacher choice, as well as district-mandated training. Examples of recent and/or upcoming professional development driven by building initiatives and teacher needs are paid PD opportunities offered in the summer to help teachers get ready for the 1:1 initiative, and SRBI training this past August reviewing the SRBI process and focusing on Tier I options with the goal of helping teachers to develop strategies and look at ways to keep struggling students in the classroom. There will be an upcoming PD on trauma-informed classrooms. When professional development is systematically aligned to faculty needs, the impact on instruction and assessment is significant.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. The school uses EdReflect as its platform for monitoring and tracking teacher progress towards improved learning as mandated by the state teacher evaluation model. More than three-quarters of the faculty believe that the input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluating their teaching plays an important role in improving their instructional practices. Each department has an administrative liaison who evaluates department members, goes to department meetings, and attends department based PLC's. Supervisors conduct informal, formal, and review of practice observations. The administration reports being in classrooms frequently, having many conversations with faculty about instruction. Walkthroughs are used as a method to inform and improve best practice. Walk-throughs are effective because the faculty welcomes feedback due to a foundation of trust between faculty and administration, but some report the state mandated process sometimes feels like a box to check. When accompanied by the opportunity for thoughtful reflection and discussion, the evaluation and supervision process can have an authentic and meaningful impact on instructional practices.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time overwhelmingly supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. Overwhelmingly, faculty members report that the twenty-three Monday late arrivals provide time for teachers to collaborate to create curriculum documents, share instructional strategies, and develop common assessments, ensuring consistency among department members teaching the same courses. The late arrival time also provides the student body with an opportunity for self-directed learning in the library, or to socialize with friends. According to the principal, some sharing of student work is done during PLC's, but more could happen. Most teachers also participate in an inter-departmental mixed PLC that allows time for collaboration on school-wide areas of focus and the forming of collegial bonds across disciplines. The hybrid rotating schedule meets student needs by allowing students to take more classes. Technology, such as Google Classroom, facilitates co-teaching with special education teachers in lieu of face-to-face meetings. Teachers strongly believe that there is a collaborative spirit among teachers and a willingness to share ideas around instruction, technology, and differentiated lessons to best serve the needs of the student population. As an after-school support between dismissal and the start of athletic practices, there is an athletic study hall for student athletes. With the current schedule in place, faculty is able to support student learning and, as a result, students feel supported and able to have their learning needs met.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Student load and class size consistently enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. Although only 68 percent of teachers agreed that their course loads and class sizes allow them to meet individual students' learning needs, the average teacher load is 77 students, the average class size is 16 students, and the teacher to student ratio is 10.2 to 1. When asked, teachers, parents, and students felt that class sizes were reasonable. Although the maximum class size for most general education classes is 24, many classes are far smaller. As a result of the low student to teacher ratio, relatively low class sizes, and teacher loads, teachers are able to individualize instruction and form meaningful relationships with students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The principal, working with the other building leaders, deliberately provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal is currently supported by three associate principals, a director of athletics and activities, a director of school counseling, a technology integration coach, district-wide curriculum specialists, and department heads. Sixty-three percent of faculty members feel that the principal and other school-based administrators provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations. The faculty trusts that the principal strongly values the importance of teaching and nurturing the whole child. Along the same lines, 57.9 percent of students agree that the principal is clear about what he wants the school to accomplish. As an example, the world language department strongly believes that the principal, as well as other building leaders, is consistently supportive of the foreign travel program because it seeks to develop leaders with strong global understanding. Building leadership views these trips as an embedded opportunity to teach civic, social and academic expectations. Support staff personnel feel that the administration is understanding of how students' social-emotional needs impact their performance. The administration is willing to collaborate with support staff to design re-entry plans and to institute school-based supports for struggling students. Because the principal's leadership is aligned to the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, he is able to consistently provide instructional leadership rooted in these values to the school's staff and students.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Teachers, students, and parents are regularly involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership. The school invites teachers, students, and their parents to be a part of the decision-making process in a number of ways. Overall, 63.6 percent of faculty members agree that teachers, students, and parents are meaningfully involved in decision-making to promote an atmosphere of responsibility and ownership. Teachers serve on a variety of school and district committees, including PDEC, scientific research based intervention (SRBI), and student of the month selection committee. The principal willingly delegates leadership responsibility among his faculty. Sixty-five percent of parents feel they have the opportunity to be involved in important decisions made at the school. The parent advisory council meets monthly and addresses a range of critical school issues. Parents can view students' progress through PowerSchool and an annual 8th grade parent night introduces parents to support services available to their child. Other events such as a financial aid information sessions help parents effectively guide their children through the college application process. Students are invited to serve on the principal's advisory committee which meets monthly with the principal. Additionally, students can take the initiative to begin a club (e.g., girls' golf team, stress free club), as long as they find a willing faculty advisor. The South Windsor student council provides other leadership opportunities. When surveyed, only 40.2 percent of students agree that they have input in important decisions made at the school, which may indicate that not all are aware of the opportunities available to them. The willingness of all stakeholders to take initiative in decision making and assume leadership roles results in a sense of shared ownership and responsibility.

Sources of Evidence

- panel presentation
- parents
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers exercise significant initiative and meaningful leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. A variety of avenues exist for teacher leadership, enhancing school culture, and increasing student engagement. Teachers pride themselves on their multiple roles as club and class advisors, coaches, committee members, and leaders throughout the school. For example, teachers have leadership roles in the NEASC self-study, serve on the faculty advisory, and serve as technology liaisons to their respective departments. Some teachers serve on the "It Takes One" committee to prepare for the bi-annual November event. One teacher is known to offer Saturday group-help sessions to assist students' mastery of learning. Teachers exercise influence through their union (SWEA) through monthly meetings between their president and the superintendent and assistant superintendents. Currently 41 teachers serve as senior capstone project advisors, working closely with their advisees. Because of the willingness of the faculty to assume leadership roles and take initiative in many areas of the school, student engagement and learning are enhanced.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teachers
- students
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The school board, superintendent, and principal are consistently collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The principal reports a positive, supportive relationship with the superintendent and the board of education. Central office staff works closely with principals and content-area curriculum specialists to build the annual budget. After being reviewed by the full committee, the superintendent presents the budget to the board for approval. The board defers to the experts, reflecting a culture of trust in the school leadership. Sixty percent of teachers believe that the school board, superintendent, and principal collaborate in the process of achieving learning expectations. The relationship between the school board, superintendent and principal is one of mutual respect. According to the principal, all parties do their homework for board meetings, which the board expects. The superintendent has one-to-one meetings with all new faculty members within the first two months of the school year. The mutual trust and reciprocal respect among the principal, superintendent, and school board enable the realization of the school's goals and 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with significant decision-making authority to lead the school. The principal reports having a great deal of autonomy in decision making, having cultivated a trusting relationship and open communication with both the school board and superintendent. Alterations have been made to the block schedule a couple of times, most recently resulting in an increase from seven to eight periods. The school board relied on the principal's judgement and thoughtful justification to vote in favor of this change despite the fact that this change had significant budgetary impact due to increased staffing needs. The trust placed in the principal's judgment allows him to effectively lead the school with a deliberate vision.

Sources of Evidence

- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The pervasively positive culture of school pride and ownership among students, faculty, and staff

Commendation

The strong working relationship based on mutual trust and respect between and among the building leadership, the superintendent, and the South Windsor Board of Education

Commendation

The multiple and varied opportunities for students to form meaningful relationships with adults in the building

Commendation

The many opportunities for teachers to take leadership roles in school improvement

Commendation

The manageable class sizes, teacher loads, and student-to-teacher ratio that allows faculty to effectively support student learning and build relationships

Commendation

The organization of time, which provides formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate in meaningful ways

Commendation

The use of restorative justice practices to engage students in meaningful reflection about behaviors

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure that all students are made aware of the numerous opportunities available to them to participate in meaningful leadership and decision-making throughout the school

Recommendation

Expand on efforts to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, ensuring that each student feels valued, challenged, respected, and safe

Recommendation

Consider expanding the number of certified support staff to more effectively and comprehensively address the mental health needs of the student population

Recommendation

Ensure that all students have the opportunity to establish a strong connection with at least one adult in the building

Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The school has timely, coordinated, and extensive directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. The scientific research based intervention (SRBI) committee is comprised of both general and special education teachers along with school support personnel including school counselors, school psychologists, one social worker, and both reading and mathematics specialists. The purpose of SRBI is to provide needed academic and/or behavior supports for struggling students before they are recommended for more specialized supports. Students who become eligible for specialized direct instruction within the special education department are assigned to a personal case manager who oversees their respective student's individualized education plan (IEP). Case managers ensure that each of their student's IEP goals and all accommodations and modifications are met within their general education classes. Before a special education student's planning and placement team (PPT) meeting, case managers solicit feedback from teachers. Students who are identified as needing only accommodations and modifications without direct service support may be eligible for a 504 plan. School counselors serve as the case managers for students receiving these services. Before the start of the new academic year, all general education teachers are required to meet with both sets of case managers and to sign off on paper documentation that they have been informed of these identified students who are in need of additional support and direct services. An alternative educational program started in the past year is designed to meet the needs of students who perform better with a low student to teacher ratio of approximately 12:1. Students enrolled in this program receive instruction from certified general education teachers. SWHS does recognize the need to reduce the anxiety level of its student population. For example, recent past speakers have addressed the topic of keeping a balanced lifestyle. Parents were invited to view the film "Race to Nowhere" and discuss the importance of embracing the well-being of the whole child. The school's security personnel also play a role in identifying students who may need additional attention. They share concerns as needed with the building administration. Over 75 percent of the staff believe that the school has timely, coordinated intervention strategies. Because SWHS teachers and staff take an active role in coordinating their programming to reach the academic and social needs of their students, all students are assured that their particular learning style will be addressed in meeting the school's learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school consistently provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. SWHS has a robust website that is updated daily and shares information about student programming in support services that include: counseling services, special education, student health services, and the library/media center. Users are able to delve deeper into each of these programs by clicking the corresponding links. For example, users may find information pertaining to student course offerings through the guidance link, information on the planning and placement team (PPT) process and the rights of parents may be found by clicking the Special Education Parent and Student Handbook link, where they may also find easy-to-download student health forms. The library provides a list of its services along with easily-accessed online documents and book availability. Additionally, all students receive a hard copy of the student handbook, Bobcat Tracks, and have access to the digital version via the school website. This student handbook includes an extensive list of programs available to students. Parents readily shared their enthusiasm for the amount of communication they receive from SWHS, and they all agreed that the information shared helped them initiate conversations with their sons or daughters. All support services are committed to excellence in their delivery of information. If a student is struggling, parents are contacted for an in school meeting where the school raises their concerns and addresses appropriate measures to ensure that their child receives the necessary supports. The time, date, and nature of these meetings are documented in PowerSchool. Students who may be eligible for a 504 plan are notified by their guidance counselor. Using a Google survey form, the school guidance department creates a needs questionnaire to ensure that these services are meeting the needs of all students. Upon referral to special education, information is sent directly home that outlines the PPT process. For students who are English language learners, information is sent home to parents. During open house all support services provide information about their supporting programs. SWHS's proactive and varied methods of communication ensure families and students in need have a wide range of access to both helpful and supportive services.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Support services staff consistently use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. The guidance department uses the Naviance program that enables students to keep track of their college process that includes access to the Common Application, the College Board, and to financial aid options. To keep track of section 504 students, the guidance department uses a database named 504 Plans. This software generates information for the parents, it outlines the plan, and is updated as needed. The third software program the guidance department uses is PowerSchool. This product maintains student data such as student tardies, absences, grades, and transcripts. The special education department uses IEP Direct to keep track of individualized student information that ultimately creates either a hard copy or electronic version of the student's IEP. This information is shared with either the student's parents or legal guardian. A summary sheet is also created and distributed to the student's general education teacher. Special education teachers and other support personnel use Microsoft Outlook for distribution and solicitation of student information. General education teachers provide access to their respective curricula via Google Classroom. The student health services is currently using the school nurse automated program (SNAP) to keep track of student health issues. The school nurse will upload emergency information into PowerSchool so that the general education teachers have easier access to this critical information. The health department will also use Google forms to verify teacher receipt of emergency plans for students in their classes. The library/media center creates their own spreadsheets to gather the information needed to keep track of student usage. Each of the support services agree that they have the right amount of technology needed for their work within their programs. Throughout the school, sound boards have been installed as these devices enhance a teacher's voice so that students who have difficulty hearing, or may be otherwise distracted, are better able to keep focused on what the teacher is saying in class. Other personal devices such as Eco Smart Pens, Eyegaze, slant boards, and text to speech are used to improve student learning. Students who are physically impaired have access to standers and access to to a physical therapist to help students stretch out throughout the day. Finally, all students have one-to-one assigned Chromebooks and this has enabled both students and teachers access to the Google Classroom platform. A technology coach is available to assist teachers in the implementation and integration of educational technology within the classrooms. Clearly, support services have the right amount of technology available and this enables each department to effectively manage communication needed to be shared among the teachers and staff, with the students and their parents, that ultimately ensures that important details are not lost and this helps promote student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- school support staff

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

While the school counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel, additional support for students' social and emotional needs is lacking. Eight school counselors serve approximately 1,300 students at South Windsor High School, including one coordinator of school counseling. They divide their team so one of the counselors is responsible for freshman students and one counselor teaches a course to the alternative education classroom, which serves twelve students. That counselor is also servicing 66 percent of caseload with the coordinator of school counseling. Seven school counselors divide students in grades 10 through 12 into equal portions within a specified alphabetical range by last name. Additionally, the high school employs one full-time school psychologist, a .8 full time equivalent (FTE) school psychologist, and a full-time social worker. The workload of these individuals is strained as they spend a great deal of their time with the needs of a smaller population of the student body. The school social worker and school psychologists specifically maintain weekly individual and group counseling caseloads that are most often for students receiving individual education plan services. Two full-time secretaries provide clerical support for the counselors, and the school has a part-time career center coordinator.

The counseling services team and support staff are in the process of creating and implementing a written, developmental program. The counselors meet with students on an individual basis and also teach classes at various times of the school year to best prepare each class for success. This year started with the counselors going into senior classes to give them a checklist of items that they should be working toward to be successful during this year. The counselor responsible for the freshman class also met with the entire grade level while pushing into their science classes. The same type of push-in occurs with the 10th grade counselors when they teach a PSAT lesson. Beyond standardized testing, students cited a lesson presented by the guidance department around the themes within the movie *Remember the Titans*. The students learned about the importance of equality and not to quickly judge a person because you could easily miss out on a really good relationship.

Counselors also meet regularly with individual students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. When requested by the student, guidance counselors meet with students during free periods, study halls, before school, and during lunch waves. Fifty-seven percent of students felt they meet with their counselors regularly. The school counseling department uses ongoing, relevant assessment data to improve student learning. The department uses surveys to collect information to improve student learning. There is data to reflect the number of contacts with outside agencies in support of students in crisis. Seniors are required to complete a year-end survey that confirms their post-secondary plans. Naviance is another tool with which the guidance department collects data. Each of these data points helps to ensure that the department is meeting the needs of current and graduating students.

The school counseling department purposefully delivers collaborative outreach and is actively involved in referral of students to appropriate area mental health agencies and social service providers. School counselors make individual referrals to local agencies and service providers on an as-needed basis. They keep detailed records on the number of times they interact with outside providers. The process typically involves frequent meetings with students for regular and ongoing support; it also requires communication between the school counselors and a representative from the outside agency and providers. Some of the outside services the guidance department works with include the Department of Children and Families, South Windsor Youth and Family Services, and Connecticut 211. Because the school counseling department works actively and collaboratively within their department and with additional school resources including special education teachers, the school nurse, and all related service providers, students in crisis receive appropriate services on a timely basis.

When the school ensures adequate staffing to meet the needs of all students, including students needing support from social workers and school psychologists, students will be better able to have their social and emotional needs met.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- school support staff

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The school's health services have an appropriate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who occasionally provide preventative health services and consistently provide direct intervention services. The high school has two school certified nurses who provide direct, preventative, and ongoing care to the students in the high school. The Endicott survey shows that 75 percent of students felt comfortable going to the school nurse. These individuals provide direct care through injury assessments and emergency care to students using established first aid procedures. They also administer preventative care including screening the 9th grade boys for scoliosis on a yearly basis. They provide ongoing care by overseeing the administration of medications to students and maintaining up-to-date cumulative health records in compliance with the requirements of the state of Connecticut. This timely care adds to the overall health and well-being of the student body.

The health services staff occasionally use a referral process to provide health services to students in need. The staff maintains records on the number and frequency of students who come to the clinic each day. The use of this data may result in a referral of a student to the appropriate support staff that could help a particular student if there is a concern with the frequency of the visits to the clinic. At this time there is no formal process for staff to refer a student to the health services team if they feel there is a concern. They could verbally bring their concern to them and it may be addressed in that way.

The health services department is working toward using ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. Although this staff maintains the records of the students in their care, the only ongoing screening that they are mandated to complete for an entire grade level is a scoliosis screening. They are in close contact with teachers about the general health of their students especially when the concussion protocol is enacted. The health services team strives to maintain close contact with parents of students in their care. They also have a web page with important information about the name and numbers of the health staff in they building.

A more formal process for staff to refer a student for health service care could increase opportunities for the preventative care offered to the students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Library/media services at South Windsor High School are frequently integrated into the curriculum and into instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff. The work of the library media staff is done by one full-time library/media specialist whose title is teacher-librarian, a full-time assistant, and two part-time media center technicians. This level of staffing is currently adequate to allow sufficient access to library/media resources by students. However, there are occasions when no certified staff is available in the library/media center, which may present a challenge for students who need assistance navigating the complexity of the print resource collection of the media center and finding alternative sources of information available.

The library/media staff consistently seeks opportunities to become actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum by using a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum. The teacher-librarian works closely with classroom teachers in a number of ways, including co-teaching lessons with ninth grade English teachers and World History classes on the research process assignments. The teacher-librarian also collaborates with English teachers to assess students' performance on the research portion of the project, which is worth 20 percent of the overall grade. The teacher-librarian also works closely with World History teachers to support students with research projects. Over 77 percent of the staff feel that library/media services personnel are actively engaged in the development and implementation of the curriculum. Faculty members commented that the teacher/media specialist being used more in classes was a positive change especially since the school has gone 1 to 1 with computers and there is a need for more in depth instruction in skills relevant to issues like plagiarism.

South Windsor High School regularly ensures that the library/media center is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school. The library media center is open before school to students as they arrive. There is a daily list of the periods that the media center will be open for that day displayed and students will come to the media center for a pass to return during an open period. The media center is also open after school until 4:00 PM because of the support personnel scheduling. The Endicott survey showed that 88 percent of students agreed that the library was available to them before, during and after school. A negative impact of co-teaching of classes is it pulls the teacher-librarian out of the media center as co teaching often happens in individual classes. This resulted in a library media center that might be seen as understaffed by trained professionals. There is still the ability to use the facility during school time as students can still enter the media center during their study halls. The self study also stated the concern that time could be better served by having a certified staff member in Library Science available during this time.

The South Windsor library/media department is somewhat responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning. There is a sufficient number of print and nonprint materials available to students to access. The library/media center has a total of 21,249 items including 147 audiobooks, 370 DVDs , and 705 e-books. The Endicott survey showed that 86 percent of students felt that the media center have the resources they needed. The budget per pupil for the media center collect is about \$35 which is almost double the national average of \$15 per student. The students also have an opportunity to access a makerspace. Staff feel that there is adequate funding for the materials needed to run a library media center, but the function of the space was changing due to the school's 1 to 1 Chromebook initiative. As a result, future needs will likely require additional resources.

The South Windsor library/media has begun to conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data collect during class period to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The teacher-librarian collects data on attendance using a visual count of students who enter the media center during the morning session and also through using a Google Form to collect data on daily attendance during the school day. This information better helps the staff to understand what staffing challenges might occur. Data was also collected and studied about circulation trends after a book collect was showcased for a month. There was a measurable increase in book check out which showed a correlation between physical

accessibility to the books and increased student interest. As the teacher-librarian continues to work on collecting data, it will create a stronger collection of materials that will be accessible to students and add to the 21st century aspects of the library/media center.

Because South Windsor's library/media center services are integrated into the curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of personnel to provide sufficient access to a wide range of resources, students have enhanced opportunities to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who: collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21 century learning expectations; provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students; and perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21 century learning expectations. According to the Endicott survey, 42 percent of staff, and 66 percent of the parents agree support services are adequately staffed. The school employs 12.5 special education teachers (7 resource room teachers, 2 who teach in a Life Skills class, one who teaches in a partially self contained program, one who serves as a transitional coordinator, one transitional coordinator assigned to students aged 18-21 at Goodwin College, and a part time position responsible for reading intervention), 23 paraprofessionals, 1.8 school psychologists, one social worker, one speech and language pathologist who works 4 days at the school, one itinerant occupational therapist, and one itinerant physical therapist. SWHS also has access to an itinerant autism specialist, a hearing impaired specialist, and a board certified behavior specialist. The department has a part time secretary who sets up the PPT meetings. While there is one district-wide director and one secondary school supervisor, SWHS did not have either a special education department coordinator or department chair department chair or coordinator. Additional supports from the school health office provides services for students who need medical support. Support services for identified services are adequate to support student learning.

Both special education teachers and all student support members actively collaborate with teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff. The Endicott survey states 73 percent of the staff respondents support the collaboration among teachers and staff. There is a freshman support team and the high school serves 16 English Language Learners. The school psychologists and social worker send out a tip of the month to remind teachers about Tier 1 intervention strategies. Special education teachers, the school social worker, and school psychologist attend twice weekly SRBI meetings for students who are struggling either academically or behaviorally. Students who receive special education services may receive direct instruction within a co-taught English or history class. SWHS offers self-contained classes in the core academic areas and a class on personal health and safety. There is a reading and math interventionist who provides direct instruction to students who have fallen short of a standardized testing. Furthermore, students who struggle are identified and required to attend a structured study hall. Struggling writers may utilize the services within the Writing Lab for additional support. There is also an athletic study hall monitored by coaches for those students involved in sports. There is a fee based after school program that provides additional academic support.

SWHS special education teachers and general education teachers collect data on their students by examination of student work, observations, progress reports, and team meetings. While special education teachers and general education collaborate, the Endicott study reports 52 percent of the staff believe they are aligned with data methods. General education teachers differentiate formative assessments to meet the needs of their students, but they also hold them accountable to the the standardized summative assessments unless the IEP stipulates an alternative summative assessment. Other data is collected after grades are posted to determine whether not an intervention strategy is needed. The SAT results also provide another set of data points to inform teachers about student performance. Every three years, most students who receive special education services are required to be re-evaluated to determine continued eligibility. Special education teachers solicit feedback from the community on an individual basis through parent meetings and either through means of telephone conversations or email. Special education uses this data to share out during the Monday Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting times. While the collection of data is occurring, it needs to be viewed through the learning expectation of each learner so best instructional practices and appropriate feedback to students is meaningful.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The availability of information to parents and the school community about all support services available to students

Commendation

The effective implementation of SRBI and Tier Two Intervention strategies

Commendation

The dedication and hard work of all special education teachers and paraprofessionals

Commendation

The collaboration between special education teachers and general education teachers

Commendation

The wide options of programs available to meet students' unique learning styles

Commendation

The installation and use of sound boards in every classroom, providing universal access for hearing-impaired students

Commendation

The widespread access to technology throughout the school, including the 1:1 Chromebook initiative

Commendation

The strong lines of communication between the health service staff and students' parents

Commendation

The library/media staff's commitment to being an integral part of the development and implementation of the curriculum

Commendation

The work of the counseling staff in supporting students' individual needs

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure that staffing levels of special education teachers, social workers, school psychologists, and support staff are adequate to meet all students' needs

Recommendation

Align data for special education students across disciplines to make it more informative and meaningful for each student

Recommendation

Ensure the regular collect of data on the alternative school program and in order to better respond to students' needs

Recommendation

Create and implement developmental guidance lessons for each grade

Recommendation

Ensure adequate staffing of the media center with certified professionals

Recommendation

Ensure adequate funding to maintain the library/media center's collection

Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The community and the district's governing body consistently 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, and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. South Windsor High School has a program where every student and teacher is provided with a Google Chromebook. Students can keep these Chromebooks for all four years of high school. There is a Help Desk in the media center that is staffed two days a week. If a student experiences Chromebook issues they can go to the Help Desk or to the Teacher-Librarian. If the Teacher-Librarian cannot help with the problem, then they will be issued a loaner Chromebook until the problem can be addressed. There is an Innovators in the Classroom (INC) committee comprised of teachers from all subjects whose purpose is to assist teachers with integration of technology in their classes. The INC has a website with model lessons on it and they are available to answer questions from other teachers. New apps or extensions can be obtained after getting approval through an online form. In addition to Google Classroom and Google Docs, sheets, and slides, the Chromebooks have other apps to engage students. A few of these programs include Pear Deck, Screencastify, We Video, and Edpuzzle. Using Screencastify students and teachers can create their own screencasts, and then Edpuzzle can be used to incorporate questions in the middle of a video. These are just a few examples, but these programs allow students to show their learning and practice skills in a variety of innovative ways.

Three times a month students have late arrival affording the faculty a little over an hour to meet in professional learning communities where they coordinate their curriculum, discuss and group score student work, and share ideas. There are also mixed professional learning community (PLC) and department meetings 2-3 times per month after school. This time helps ensure that all students are receiving the same curriculum regardless of what teacher they may have and allows teachers necessary collaboration time. The opportunity is afforded for teachers to work across disciplines and become more adept at incorporating technology into their classes. Once a month there is a full faculty meeting after school. A new program that has been initiated this year is the Freshman Seminar which is offered through the Career Technology Department. This course helps ninth graders with a variety of life skills including organization and digital citizenship. There is sufficient funding for a full range of technology support, equipment, and instructional materials and supplies as evidenced by teacher interviews and the Endicott Survey. According to the survey, 78 percent of the staff agreed there was sufficient funding for instructional materials, supplies, and equipment and 89.4 percent agreed there was sufficient funding for technology support. Teachers overwhelmingly felt that their budgetary needs were heard and met.

The educational cost-sharing reimbursement funds that South Windsor expected to receive for the 2017-2018 school year were reduced from \$13 million to \$12.1 million due to the state's deficit. This five percent decrease translated to the loss of 1.2 literacy intervention specialists and a .5 FTE math intervention specialist. The Math Learning Center is now manned with a math intervention specialist four periods out of the day as compared to five previously. There is also a Writing Center where students can get help from peers. There is a teacher in charge who will match a peer tutor with a struggling student. The special education department was also affected by these cuts resulting in special education teachers with caseloads of over 30 students each. There has been a new special education teacher added this year, thus caseloads are currently in the twenties. The budget for the 2017-2018 school year has a reduction of 8.5 special education paraprofessional positions district-wide, and does not provide funding for paraprofessional substitutes. This has affected the high school with the loss of four paraprofessionals. Although they are covering all students in need, when a paraprofessional is absent and no substitute is provided, schedules have to be rearranged and assignments juggled in order to accommodate the one on one student needs.

Because the community and district have provided sufficient funding, South Windsor High School is able to offer a wide variety of programs and services to meet the needs of all students. The time that has been allocated to professional development and curriculum revision has enabled the written curriculum to become a living and useful document ensuring that all students are getting a unified curriculum. The funding of technology support,

equipment, and instructional materials and supplies, ensures students are exposed to a wide variety of learning and curricular opportunities.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school continually develops, plans, and funds programs 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. Every day the Director of Facility Operations meets with the head custodian and head of maintenance. This meeting will address jobs or repairs that need to be taken care of that day. Problems such as clogged sinks or broken lights are dealt with within a day or two. In addition to nine full time custodians, one part time custodian, and one floater at the high school, the district has five maintenance workers who have certifications of electrician, HVAC, and plumber among them. Teachers who need anything repaired or installed can call the main office and if parts are required for a bigger job there is an electronic Help Desk Ticket that can be filled out. There was a resounding message from students, parents, and faculty that the school building is kept clean and well maintained. There is clear organization as to who is responsible for budget requests for equipment and technology. For instance, the curriculum specialists and curriculum program coordinators must maintain and monitor equipment, while the director of technology systems is responsible for instructional technology. Each department budgets for repairs and maintenance and certain equipment is repaired or replaced on regular or as-needed basis. An example would be that the technical education department replaces its digital cameras every four years. The science department have all microscopes and balances serviced every July. All departments are consistent in their methods of maintaining, cataloging, and replacing equipment. Maintaining a clean, well-maintained, and functioning school building allows teachers to focus on student learning, utilize technology, and fully implement a rich and varied curriculum.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The community consistently funds and the school consistently implements a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. South Windsor High School has a ten-year capital improvement plan. Records from 1994 on show that major projects have been completed almost every year in order to update the facility, increase security, improve handicapped access, increase efficiency, and add storage. Recently two boilers at the high school have been converted to gas and it is currently in the budget to convert the third one in 2019. Also happening in 2019, an architect will be redesigning the library for renovations to update and modernize it. Currently, the water fountains are being replaced with fountains that have bottle fillers to reduce the use of plastic. An ongoing project is roof replacement. This has been happening in parts over the summers and next summer will see another part of the roof replaced. Every year new wire is run through the building to maintain and improve technology, ensuring that connectivity and wifi is reliable and accessible by all students and teachers.

The administration has long range plans for staffing, eighth grade transition into the high school, and intervention programs to meet the needs of incoming students. The principal utilizes district enrollment numbers to plan for staffing needs, paying attention to the special education population. Intervention classes, an SRBI referral process, and reading interventions must be staffed properly to accommodate incoming students. The district has also provided Chromebooks for every high school student and a technology coach to provide support in the meaningful use of technology to enhance and improve student learning. In addition to orientations and tours, there is a community ambassador transitioning squad (CATS) to assist eighth grade students as they enter high school. The squad provides activities for the freshmen throughout the year. The community provides adequate funds and the school uses those funds to maintain a fully functioning building and to provide students with services that will help them succeed as they enter high school, regardless of any special needs they have.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

To a large degree, the faculty and building administrators are involved in the development and implementation of the budget. The initial budget process begins with the curriculum specialist, who makes budget requests based on the needs of students and teachers in their areas of instruction. Program and personnel requests are incorporated into the principal's budget which balances individual requests with the needs of the whole school. As part of the process the central office personnel conferences with each curriculum specialist along with the administrative team to share budget priorities. The assistant superintendent of personnel is responsible for budgeting the personnel needs.

Finally, the district superintendent has the final say of what is presented to the board of education. The board of education may modify the superintendent's budget based on the town council's direction. The budget must be approved by the town council, and the board of education. In recent years the town council has requested the budget to be cut. The board of education is in charge of making the line-item cuts to meet the bottom-line figures imposed by the town council. While interviewing members of the board of education and central office personnel, it was apparent that there is a true respect and trust between the two groups. The Board of Education spoke of trusting that the superintendent is mindful of making meaningful requests for essential and important budget items that will improve the education of South Windsor students. As a result budget process the school budget is almost always passed by a town vote every year.

While the Endicott survey shows that only 35.6 percent of the faculty believe they have a formal way to provide input into the development of the school's budget, faculty members also admit that nearly all of their needs are met on an annual basis. Also, while speaking to teachers at SWHS, it became apparent that some teachers feel the curriculum specialist for their department does an excellent job of soliciting budget suggestions while a few of the faculty members would like input into the process. The input that faculty and building administrators have in the development and implementation of the budget ensures that students needs are met.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The school site and plant consistently support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. SWHS is a well-maintained building with trained and professional maintenance and custodial staff. The building and grounds receive compliments from visitors, parents, and students. While talking with the maintenance and custodial staff it was determined that they can usually turn around a maintenance work order in 24 hours. The 2017 Endicott survey shows that 77.3 percent of the staff responded positively that the school site and plant support the delivery of high-quality school programs and services. Parents had an 88.4 percent agreement that the school's physical plant is conducive to education. The building is equipped with large science labs that include storage space for equipment and chemicals. There is a science room full of fish tanks with a variety of fish. The botany class tends a garden of flowers and vegetables in a courtyard. The metals classroom is equipped with a variety of machines, from an old fashioned metal cutting machine to computer controlled machines that deal with different types of metals. There is also space for jewelry, pottery, and culinary classes. The library, however, has been identified by school personnel as an area that needs to be brought up to date and modernized. The cafeteria kitchen is very spacious, including large cool storage and food preparation workbenches. It has state of the art cooking equipment. The dining room is large enough to accommodate the students so long as the school has four different lunch waves. There are a variety of facilities beyond the core facilities including a makerspace in the media center and a seminar room for hosting large-scale lectures and workshops. Also a beautiful new turf field was installed in the fall of 2015. The field does not have lighting for night time events, however. The gymnasium space in the physical building is limited. The staff at SWHS has identified storage space to be limited in most areas of the building. The drama department storage is limited making it difficult to manage events in the theater that coincide. The school has adequate classrooms. The outdoor space is large with plenty of parking and security cameras. To improve emergency response time and increase the visibility of administrators, there are two administrative offices, one on each floor of the building. The building has clean and spacious bathrooms throughout the school; however, there is not a bathroom for transgender students. Family and consumer sciences classes operate a nursery school for children ages three to five at the school and have integrated technology as a means of sharing information about the children. The science department hosts a variety of laboratory spaces for students use, including spaces for a greenhouse, a fish tank room, and observation deck for astronomy. A former elementary school building on the adjacent property is being used for housing an Alternative high school program and culinary classes run by the family and consumer sciences department. There is concern surrounding the wide temperature fluctuations throughout the school building facilities, with some areas running too warm and other areas running too cool at times. The principal budgets for AC units in classrooms every year, but only about fifty percent of the building is currently air conditioned. Although the AC requirements of all individualized education plans (IEPs) are being met, there is a vast range of temperatures between classes resulting in uncomfortable learning environments. As a result of the school site and plant supporting the delivery of high quality school programs and services, students and teachers are supported in learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

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. The Fire Marshall conducts two formal inspections a year and is often called in to make sure that structural changes meet code. Inspections from the year 2017 stated that at the time of inspection, no code violations were identified, and a certificate of approval was recommended. One of these was a re-inspection. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are kept on file for all chemicals used within the building per Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. These MSDS binders are up to date in various areas of the building including the art department, science department, career and technical education department, and facilities operations.

Supplies in the health room were inspected by the school nurse and found to be adequate and within expiration dates. All areas of the building are handicapped accessible including the auditorium and a fume hood in the chemistry lab. There is a chemical hygiene officer in the high school responsible for proper storage, handling, and disposal of chemicals in the middle and high school. This is a teacher who has received training and then in turn trains and updates the teachers on the safety protocols of dealing with the chemicals. Keeping up with fire codes and maintaining complete and up to date MSDS files helps ensure the safety of everyone within the school.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- school leadership
- school support staff

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

The majority of professional staff are fully committed to actively engaging 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. Teachers and administrators engage with parents and families as partners in the education of students through the use of technology. SWHS uses Naviance, PowerSchool, School Messenger and the high school website. The school website, the school newsletter, daily news, and announcements are available to students, parents and families. According to the 2017 Endicott survey, 81.4 percent of staff and 66.8 percent of parents agreed with being well connected to the school.

When it comes to tracking academic achievement, parents can choose to receive a weekly grade email update generated through PowerSchool. Teachers reach out to parents through email using PowerSchool and by phone to parents regarding any student that has a D or F in their class at the end of a marking period. Naviance, a program the school counseling department uses with parents and students, sends parents emails from the school counseling department about upcoming college visits and scholarships available to students. Parents can also subscribe to School Messenger, which alerts parents to important developments occurring within the South Windsor School District, such as school closings, report cards, and lockdowns. Attendance clerks also make personal phone calls home for absences when a student is known as unverified for attendance.

The school's faculty take part in various evening activities with parents, which are designed to inform, educate, and engage parents on current events within the high school. Many departments in the school host exhibition nights to showcase student work. The first event during the school year is open house, which allows parents to meet their child's teachers and learn about their child's specific classes and curriculum. The principal estimates that 85 to 90 percent of the school families attend back to school night in the fall. There are parent information nights for each grade level, and two parent events for ninth-grade parents. School counselors and teachers speak about what students should expect regarding homework, improving grades, and how to have the most positive experience possible at the high school. There are grade level parent nights held in the fall. These nights are designed to be informative conversations about grade level expectations and concerns relevant to the grade level. The program for seniors includes transition to college along with financial aid planning. A variety of vocational and community college representatives are present to offer post-secondary opportunities.

The counseling department offers programming for transfer students, providing extensive orientation to the school and follow-up throughout the school year, including an orientation breakfast and a variety of follow-up activities. These activities include a gathering of students before mid-term exams to help students with strategies for exam prep. They also send a formal invite to each student to an end of the year wrap-up. This event serves two fold; one to help bring the new students back together and two to help counselors gage the progress of the new students and make adjustments for the following year.

Parents are informed if their student is eligible for educational services through a letter designating the details of those services and why they are eligible and invited to attend all 504 and planning and placement team meetings to discuss appropriate accommodations and modifications for their child. Teachers are committed to a 24 hour turnaround time in answering emails and phone calls from parents. When a child is struggling in a class, teachers reach out to parents to invite them in for family conferences at the high school. When it comes to academic integrity issues, as a protocol parents are invited a family conference at the school. Parents also interact with the school community via athletic booster clubs. These clubs work to fundraise money in order to provide the best experience possible for their athletes. The fundraising dollars are used for various initiatives including but not limited to athletic apparel, transportation needs, and others. Collectively, these booster clubs work to ensure that the athletes have the ability to demonstrate social expectations for student learning, including establishing mental well-being, creating resilience, and commitment to lifelong wellness. Because the professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education, students have more support in achieving their goals.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

South Windsor High School has developed extensive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. South Windsor High School offers a variety of opportunities for students to learn outside the traditional high school setting. Students who meet requirements may participate in programs at Manchester and Asnuntuck Community Colleges. Some of these classes are concurrent courses at South Windsor High School giving students the opportunity to earn college credit from Manchester Community College. Other programs include the University of Connecticut's Early College Experience courses (ECE) and Advanced Placement courses through the College Board. In addition to this, there is a virtual program which affords students a chance to take online courses to earn high school credits.

The counseling department works with many outside groups to provide help with after high school planning and scholarship opportunities. The career center has brought in representatives from two- and four-year colleges, technical schools, and the military. There is also an annual college fair and scholarship opportunities many of which are sponsored by local business and community organizations such as the South Windsor Little League, Rotary Club, Operation Graduation, and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. South Windsor High School students complete a full-scale Capstone program. The program gives students the opportunity to make connections in the community with a wide range of agencies. Students have worked with the senior center running a technology help desk. They participate in internships with the National Cancer Society, they job shadow at state parks and the Boston Museum of Science.

South Windsor High School utilizes town veterans to speak to the students, has the registrar of voters come to the school, and has a school industry advisory board with local business leaders, alumni, faculty, and students participating. Business professionals that have taken part on the industry advisory board include Cigna, Shea & Company Real Estate, Berkshire Hathaway, TSM Landscaping and the University of Hartford Women's Business Center. The industry advisory board provides students with valuable knowledge such as local trends in employment, desired skill sets, career competencies, and a career fair with many businesses attending. In addition, the industry advisory board helps the South Windsor School District in fulfilling their Perkins Fund requirement, which provides grant money for equipment and professional development in career and technical education. South Windsor High School participates in the national program of HP4K, a program that pairs a former pro hockey player with a school. The player networks to bring other players to the school to discuss with students the importance of gaining a higher education and goal setting. The students then give back to the elementary school by conducting writing workshops with the students. South Windsor High School also has Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) club which has partnered with local businesses to provide students with insights on the rights and obligations of owning a business. By developing strong and productive community, business, and higher education partnerships, South Windsor High School is able to offer students authentic learning opportunities and valuable real world business knowledge.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- school support staff

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The dependable funding provided by the community to offer a wide range of school programs and services

Commendation

The sufficient and consistent funding to support technology, equipment, and instructional materials and supplies

Commendation

The daily maintenance of the building to ensure that students and staff enjoy a clean and fully functioning environment

Commendation

The adequate funding for repair and replacement of equipment and technology

Commendation

The consistent and productive communication between school administrators and maintenance personnel to ensure the building is adequately maintained

Commendation

The school's and the community's commitment to meeting the long range goals of maintaining the facility

Commendation

The positive working relationship between the school district personnel and board of education based on mutual respect and trust

Commendation

The superintendent's comprehensive, strategic, and transparent budget process which consistently results in strong community support

Commendation

The large number and diverse partnerships that have been developed with the community, local businesses, and

higher education facilities

Commendation

The opportunities for parents to become involved in the educational process of their children at SWHS

Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Ensure that curriculum specialists engage all teachers in their departments in the budget development process

Recommendation

Ensure adequate and consistent HVAC functions

Recommendation

Provide adequate bathroom facilities to meet the needs of the diverse population

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Gregory Myers - Millbury Memorial Junior-Senior High School

Assistant Chair: Justin Roy - Spaulding High School

Team Members

Mary Binkowski - Guilford High School

Diane Bourque - Fairfield Ludlowe High School

Julie Chevan - Amity Regional Senior High School

Ciara Cohen - Francis T. Maloney High School

Jamie Coleman - Darien High School

Deb DeMeo - Amity Regional Senior High School

Dr. Mary Gadd - Cheshire High School

Elizabeth Greenblatt - Newington High School

Mr. Steven LePage - Plainville Community Schools

Brad Normand - East Lyme High School

Lori Peck - Ridgefield High School

Michelle Piccolo - Shelton High School

Taylor Ramsay - Spaulding High School

Mark Waller - East Granby High School