New England Association of Schools and Colleges

Commission on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Committee for
Northwestern Regional High School
Regional District #7

Barkhamsted, Colebrook, and New Hartford
Connecticut

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

THE DISTRIBUTION, USE AND SCOPE OF
THE VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

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

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

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INTRODUCTION

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) is the oldest of the four 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 that seek voluntary affiliation.

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

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

> Teaching and Learning Standards
>> Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
>> Curriculum
>> Instruction
>> Assessment of and for Student Learning

> Support Teaching and Learning Standards
>> School Culture and Leadership
>> School Resources for Learning
>> Community Resources for
>> Learning.

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

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Northwestern Regional High School, a committee of 16 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people. The self-study of Northwestern Regional High School extended over a period of 16 months from February 2010 to October 2012.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their adherence to the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's mission, learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self- Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved

by the Committee, Northwestern Regional 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 was approved by the entire professional staff.

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of 16 evaluators was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate teaching and learning, assessment, and the quality of the implementation of the NEASC standards at Northwestern Regional High School. The Committee members spent four days in Winsted, Connecticut, Regional School District #7, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school meets the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools, central office administration, and vocational institutions, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Northwestern Regional High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials

- 32 hours shadowing 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 28 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning

- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers

- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

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

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

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Northwestern High School is located in Winsted, Connecticut and serves the towns of Barkhamsted, Colebrook, New Hartford, and Norfolk. The school is located in Litchfield County and is considered Regional District #7. The district is composed of two public schools, a 7-8 grade middle school and a 9-12 grade high school.

The four towns within the district have similar socio-economic and racial backgrounds. The data shows that 3.7% of the students are below poverty level and eligible for free and reduced lunch. The four towns lack diversity as 98% of the residents are white. The other 2% consists of Asians, African-Americans, and Hispanics. English is the primary language spoken within the communities.

As of the 2010-2011 school year, the school's enrollment consisted of 809 students. The school's population is stable and there are very few transient students. The number of students that complete four years at Northwestern Regional High School is 98%. The graduation rate varies between 98-99%. The annual dropout rate varies between 0.1-0.3%. Daily student attendance averages at 94-95%. The average number of days due to illness or personal time for teachers is 6.1. The data shows that the graduating class of 2010 had 64% planning to attend four-year schools, 25% planning to attend two-year schools, 0.6% planning to enter the military, 4% planning to go directly into the work force and 6.9% were undecided about post-secondary plans.

In 2009-2010 the school spent $13,132 per pupil, slightly below the state average of $13,496. For the fiscal year ending 2009, Barkhamsted appropriated 59% of its local taxes for the school's budget while New Hartford appropriated 47%, Colebrook at 45%, and Norfolk at 25%. This varies from year to year depending upon the number of students sent from each town.

There are many educational opportunities available to students and the community including Adult Education, Driver's Education, Agricultural Education, Students in Transitional Educational Placement (STEP), a course extension program, and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). The school works with local businesses to provide authentic learning experiences for students. Some of these businesses include Northwest Community Bank, The Warner Theatre, Camp Jewell, and Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA). The Agricultural Education program provides a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) at several local businesses such as the Winsted Animal Hospital and Eagle Wood Farm. In addition, the school partners with Northwestern Community College, UCONN Torrington branch, Torrington High School, and UCONN ECE Program to provide students with educational opportunities beyond the traditional high school program.

Many avenues for student recognition exist. The National Honor Society inducts a large number of students every year. A list of honor students is published four times a year, but students are recognized for their achievements and talents in a variety of ways: sports awards at the end of each season, Agricultural Education awards ceremony, end-of-the-year awards in every academic discipline, music festivals, scholastic art awards, Berkshire League and All-State awards, scholar-athlete awards, and good citizenship letters. In addition, students are often recognize for their service to the community as they participate in events such as blood drives, the Special Olympics' Penguin Plunge, walks for Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), and Relay for Life.

At Northwestern Regional High School, we believe that it is important to celebrate students in a variety of ways. They are recognized for their individual achievements and their unique contributions to our school community.

Core Values and Beliefs of Northwestern Regional High School

Northwestern Regional High School fosters academic and personal excellence in every student. In partnership with families and communities, we create a safe learning environment dedicated to developing the skills of lifelong learning. Our dynamic and challenging educational program prepares individuals to respect diversity and become responsible citizens in a rapidly evolving global environment.

We value academic excellence

We believe in:
• high academic expectations
• commitment to lifelong learning
• innovative and independent thinking

We value the pursuit of personal excellence in all aspects of our lives

We believe in:
• acting responsibly with the interests of others in mind
• allowing student choice in the learning process
• giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways

We value global awareness

We believe in:
• taking an active role in a global society
• demonstrating respect for diversity

We value partnership with families and communities

We believe in:
• community involvement
• social responsibility
• open communication between the school and family

We value a safe learning environment

We believe in:
• developing bonds between students and staff
• demonstrating respect for ourselves and other
• taking educational risks by challenging oneself
• providing students the opportunity to be heard

In addition to acquiring the knowledge embedded in our school's rigorous curriculum, students will:

Academic
• demonstrate critical thinking in reading, writing, and problem-solving
• demonstrate creativity, innovation, and adaptability
• demonstrate effective communication skills

Civic
• demonstrate an understanding of global awareness

Social
•demonstrate effective interpersonal and collaborative skills

TEACHING AND LEARNING
STANDARDS

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

CURRICULUM

INSTRUCTION

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

1 Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Effective schools identify core values and beliefs about learning that function as explicit foundational commitments to students and the community. Decision-making remains focused on and aligned with these critical commitments. Core values and beliefs manifest themselves in research-based, school-wide 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 best 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, and are defined by school-wide analytic rubrics that identify 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.

Conclusions

Northwestern Regional High School has created a clear set of core values and beliefs about learning that are supported by 21st century learning expectations and are set forth in a written document, available to and created by all stakeholders. The collaborative process for the creation of the core values and beliefs statement began in February 2009, were revisited in faculty meetings through the school year and again during an in-service in November 2009. The faculty reviewed research-based best practices regarding the identification of core values for a school, and over the course of two years met and discussed what they determined to be their core values. A parent group met to discuss their beliefs about core values and learning expectations. An off-site meeting of teachers, administrators, parents, students, board members and members of the community (the learning community) was held on February 4, 2010 to discuss and review a previously approved mission statement. In the winter of 2010 the faculty and board of education approved a new statement of core values and beliefs, which was immediately printed on all stationary, included in the program of studies and in student agendas and posted on signs throughout the school. Students and teachers currently report a general understanding of these core values but often express uncertainty about how these values and beliefs impact student learning. Students and teachers report a general understanding of the core values, many show enthusiasm in their compliance, but the impact on student learning must be translated from vision to common knowledge. When the communication of the core values and beliefs are fully incorporated into school culture, it will increase the focus on student learning. (self-study, student panel, class observations, board of education, parent meeting, student shadowing, teacher interviews, Endicott survey)

Northwestern Regional High School established 21st century learning expectations for students that address academic, social, and civic competencies and then created seven school-wide analytic rubrics to measure these competencies. The rubrics were created by interested faculty and designed with achievement levels that mirror those found on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test: Advanced, Goal, Proficient, Basic and Below Basic. These rubrics are explicit in their descriptors of each achievement level. The Endicott survey shows that 64.1 percent of students, 70.0 percent of teachers and 77.7 percent of parents agree that these expectations are challenging. The survey also indicates that 65.7 percent of students are familiar with the school-wide rubrics used to assess assignments. Although the evidence boxes show that the rubrics were used in the previous school year, some teachers reported that rubrics were introduced as recently as the current school year and must be modified to suit their needs. The learning community's recognition of the need to fully implement its identified core values and beliefs will result in its further incorporation into the school culture and will enhance student learning. (self-study, teacher interviews, department leaders, student work, student interviews, Endicott survey)

Northwestern's Core Values, Beliefs and 21st Century Learning Expectations are reflected in the culture of the school. The learning community is ubiquitous in the perception of a standard of excellence for academics as stated in the core values and beliefs. Clubs and activities such as REACT (Random Efforts Always Change Tomorrow), SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving), GSA (Gay Straight Alliance), the Green Team (environmental group) and the Mentoring Club support a holistic approach to student excellence both in academics and personal development in keeping with the school's core values and beliefs. However, the role of the learning expectations in guiding school policies, procedures, and decisions is evident to a limited extent. Considerable resources have been allocated to purchase new technology such as Nook, Ebooks, SMARTBoards, an iPad Lab, Aerohives, Haiku, and lingtlanguage.com. Given the recent development of the learning expectations, efficacy in driving curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom is still

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developing. A need exists for a better understanding of how the core values and beliefs of a school can drive curriculum, instruction and assessment if students are to meet the learning expectations directed by the core values and belief statement. There is little evidence of the use of common language by staff members to facilitate calibration of student assessment of achievement of the learning expectations. As the agreed upon core values are translated from vision to common understanding throughout the learning community, they will guide the decision making process at Northwestern Regional High School. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers, school board, department leaders, student activities booklet)

Northwestern Regional High School is in the preliminary stages of working with its new core values and beliefs and the learning expectations that will support those beliefs. All stakeholders met and reviewed a previous mission statement, and collectively created the current statement, which is aligned with district goals. Recently, additions were made to the electronic grade book used by teachers to include the assessments of student achievement on school-wide rubrics. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that meet monthly were recently formed to facilitate collaboration within departments about the ongoing revision and implementation of core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. When formal agendas are created to drive common language and best practices in the PLC workgroups, Northwestern Regional High School will fully implement the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations it has identified. (self-study, teacher interview, teachers, department leaders, school leadership)

Commendations:

1. The involvement of the learning community in an inclusive process to identify and create a set of core values and beliefs about learning
2. The creation of rubrics to measure the learning expectations for academic, civic, and social competencies identified in the school's core values and belief statement
3. The alignment of district and school learning expectations
4. The ubiquitous perception that Northwestern Regional High School is a school of high standards
5. The extent to which the Core Values and Beliefs are reflected in the culture of the school
6. The use of PLC's to collaborate about the implementation of the Core Values and Beliefs

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement a process to monitor classroom utilization of school-wide rubrics to inform instruction
2. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom as well as guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations
3. Develop and implement a plan to regularly re-evaluate Northwestern Regional High School's core values that represents all stakeholders in the process and is informed by current research and student achievement of school-wide rubrics

2 Curriculum

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 school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics.

3. The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through:
   - inquiry and problem-solving
   - higher order thinking
   - cross-disciplinary learning
   - authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school
   - informed and ethical use of technology.

4. There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum.

5. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.

6. Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities.

7. The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research.

Conclusions

Northwestern Regional High School has identified 21st century learning expectations and is in the process of creating and implementing curriculum documents purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations, although implementation is ongoing.

Currently, the faculty is converting curriculum documents from paper held in binders to a web-based program using Curriculum Mapper, a process that began in the fall of 2011. These documents will also be revised to include 21st century standards. Teachers use school-wide rubrics, but often need to adjust or adapt the school-wide rubrics to suit their needs. When the school completes the revision of all curricula into the common format provided by Curriculum Mapper, all curriculum will provide the framework for students to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (Curriculum Mapper, curriculum binders, self-study, teacher interviews, panel discussions, program of studies, student work)

Northwestern Regional High School has created written curriculum that emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge. The agricultural education program, the college prep level, honors, and AP course offerings provide a curriculum that emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge. However, the curriculum for general education classes in some classrooms focused on basic skills and memorization, as evidenced by classroom observations and several remarks from students in follow-up interviews to those observations. Among the staff and students there is a widespread opinion that these students are not able to learn at the level of college prep/honors students. Similarly, some curriculum focuses on inquiry and problem-solving as well as higher order thinking skills. However, that focus is primarily in the Advanced Placement, honors, and college prep level curriculum. In these classes students are asked to interpret, investigate, and explore, while the general level students in the same course are expected to solve, use, work toward and find. Additionally, in English courses, honors and college preparatory level's curriculum is literature-based, while general level's emphasis is on grammar. Higher order thinking is apparent and celebrated in some classes, but a careful review of the general level classes that remain in the curriculum is needed to ensure that all students are learning at high levels. There is little formal interdisciplinary learning occurring in the high school.

One program which is a strong example of interdisciplinary learning is the school's banking program. All other interdisciplinary connections are reported in teacher or course-specific instances. For example, an English teacher asks her students to research a certain time period before reading a work of literature. Similarly, a history teacher in the honors level asks his students to read a work of fiction as they study a period of history. Teachers express a desire for cross-disciplinary learning and a desire to co-teach a course in which a formal curriculum has been created in a thoughtful and purposeful way. As a result of a lack of interdisciplinary planning, students are not given formal opportunities to apply concepts between disciplines. Due to the geographical isolation of the community, learning outside the classroom is challenging but the administration and faculty are committed to creating those opportunities. Students report opportunities to take community college classes, to participate in Agriscience Career Development Events and to conduct Agriculture Work Based Experience Projects. A few students have the opportunity to apply skills serving as teacher assistants in the classroom. The Endicott survey shows that 62.4 percent of parents agree that their son/daughter has a number of opportunities to apply what he/she is learning to real life situations. Northwestern Regional High School teaches students about the informed and ethical use of technology. The media specialist meets with each freshman student to review the school's ethical use of technology expectations. Additionally, the advisory curriculum has been created to include an

annual unit to address Internet Safety/Social Networking. Thus, students are encouraged to make informed and ethical use of technology. Until the curriculum emphasizes a depth of understanding and application of knowledge at all levels through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking skills, interdisciplinary and authentic learning, the ability for all students to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations will not be equitable. (Endicott survey, self-study, program of studies, student work, curriculum binders, student interviews, classroom observations).

In some areas there is a clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. Some departments are aligned with their written curriculum, but this is dependent upon the leadership of individual department heads. In some classes the written and taught curricula are clearly aligned. Every department has contributed to writing curriculum in the Curriclum Mapper, but a careful review of curriculum needs to be implemented, as some courses are not represented with curriculum in the binders or in Curriculum Mapper. As the school has been working on a number of different initiatives in the past three years, teachers report that it has been difficult to update Curriculum Mapper adequately. Currently, there are 261 courses that need to be transferred from the curriculum binders to Curriculum Mapper. Additionally, there are many courses that do not have any curriculum or are missing significant components such as the 21st century learning expectations. When every curriculum is reviewed, written, and updated in Curriculum Mapper, all students will have equal opportunity to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (Curriculum Mapper, curriculum binders, teacher interviews).

Northwestern Regional High School coordinates curriculum throughout its departments in an informal manner. There is no formal curriculum coordination or vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school and no formal coordination with the middle school. Discussions with department heads and teachers reveal that the only formal time for teachers to collaborate and discuss curriculum is during the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) time once a month for 45 minutes. Department heads teach four classes a day and have two cafeteria duties. In the remaining time they must conduct all the duties necessary to operate the department and to supervise the teachers in their departments. All other curriculum coordination is performed by individual teachers after school throughout the school year. The exception is the math department which has made curriculum coordination a priority and voluntarily meets one day a week after school. Articulation between the middle and high school staff occurs informally. Several teachers report that the school had common professional development time approximately seven years ago, but little to none since then. Reduction in staffing levels has required teachers of electives to divide their time between the middle and high school which is a teachers' concern. As a result of the lack of articulation from the sending school, some students encounter content at the high school that they have already experienced at the middle school. Additionally, the learning expectations for students within the same academic level varies between and within departments. Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation between and among all academic areas within the school and with the middle school will result in a purposefully designed set of course offerings. (teacher interviews, department meetings).

Due to the administration's effective work in the past three years, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning experiences. One commons period, or study hall, for upperclassmen, has as many as fifty-six students. Course offerings have decreased as a result of a loss of staffing. Throughout the self-study, teachers report that there is not enough technology in the school. However, in the past school year, the technology in the building has increased. During the NEASC fall visit, teachers reported that many new SMARTBoards, laptops, iPads, Nooks, and Chrome books have been purchased and are being used by students on a regular basis. The school has implemented a Bring Your Own Device policy to allow students to access their mobile devices during class for learning activities. Additionally, a one-year position has been created

to provide the school with a technology integration specialist who is available to train teachers on the new technologies and to assist teachers as they begin to use Haiku. Recently the English IV curriculum has changed from a full-year English course to two electives to fulfill the senior year English requirement. Previously, students had been able to take both an English IV and an English elective, but due to staffing cuts, some elective options are no longer available. Technology and supplies are sufficient at the high school, and teachers are able to instruct students with the curriculum that exists. Because of the loss of staffing and the distribution of co-teachers and paraprofessionals in the general education classes, students are not enrolled in a full offering of classes, and are scheduled in unstructured study halls. Many students report that when a course is full they are assigned to study hall or commons, resulting in as many as three periods of commons for upperclassmen. However, counselors add that they make every attempt to convince students to challenge themselves in courses. If staffing is increased, students will be able to avail themselves of a more diverse menu of course offerings (teacher interviews, student interviews, central office meetings, program of studies).

There is neither enough time nor financial resources provided for teachers to conduct ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. A formal review based on current research in the process of developing, evaluating, and revising curriculum was not in evidence. Teachers use the monthly PLC meetings to discuss curriculum if they choose to do so. All other curriculum discussions are ongoing, informal, and organic. However, teachers report that they are regularly allowed to attend professional development workshops. When the learning community creates and implements a formal plan for professional development, as well as meaningful time for its implementation, 21st century standards will be fully implemented in the curriculum. (self-study, curriculum box, teacher schedules, teacher interview, curriculum binders, classroom observations, student interviews, Endicott survey)

Commendations:

1. The dedication teachers have demonstrated to students and to aligning curriculum horizontally in their voluntary meetings after school hours
2. The teachers' willingness to informally collaborate with each other in order to improve their instruction
3. The encouragement of the staff to attend regular professional development outside of the building
4. The teachers have begun to implement school-wide rubrics in their classrooms to assess student work
5. The posting of curriculum on a web platform enabling all teachers to see all curricula
6. The increased technology to support teaching and learning
7. The adoption of curriculum mapper
8. The creation of the advisory curriculum
9. The extensive variety of course and extracurricular opportunities

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement a timeline to review, revise, and complete all curricula
2. Develop and implement a process to ensure that all students are provided curriculum that emphasizes depth of understanding and the application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic learning opportunities

3. Develop and implement a process to provide effective curriculum coordination and vertical articulation between and among all departments within the school and with the middle school
4. Provide sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research

3 Instruction

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.

Conclusions

Northwestern Regional High School faculty recently developed a new set of core values and beliefs about learning that provides a framework for school-wide rubrics. Teachers are now beginning to use the school-wide rubrics to assess where students are along a continuum from Below Basic to Advanced on specific department rubrics. Some are using other rubrics on individual assignments. Some teachers report that the rubrics need revision if they are to be used effectively across all disciplines. While the principal reports that individual assessment of students on the school-wide rubrics will be reported to students and their families, his vision is new and must be communicated effectively to all stakeholders to ensure common understanding and effectiveness. Instruction was formerly organized using the Understanding by Design (UBD) curriculum model to include 21st century skills. Once the curriculum is completely online through Curriculum Mapper, every teacher will be able to easily review and adjust units and lessons to reflect 21st century skills. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were introduced to NRHS four years ago with meetings scheduled for 45 minutes once a month after school. This time was used to brainstorm and collaborate about student learning to ensure alignment with NRHS's 21st Century Skills, Core Values, and Learning Expectations. Some of this time has been used for NEASC preparation in the last year and a half. Some departments have made a commitment to meet at least once per week on their own time as teaching teams to develop new lessons that are more aligned with the school's 21st century skills, core values, and learning expectations. During this time, those departments have developed more technology-based and inquiry-based lessons. Once rubrics are revised to be a clear vehicle for assessing the core values and beliefs and a mechanism is developed to use the data to inform instruction, instruction will be strengthened. (teachers, department leaders, teacher interview, self-study, panel presentation)

Instructional practices of teachers at NRHS support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by engaging students as active and self-directed learners, emphasizing inquiry, problem-solving, higher order thinking, applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, engaging students in self-assessment and reflection, and integrating technology. Teachers know students well and evidence of personalizing instruction was common on an informal basis. When differentiation is based on data and applied with common protocols based on core values, students will benefit consistently. While there is still some reliance upon lecture and while there are whole class activities that do not employ differentiation, the faculty employs a wide variety of techniques to personalize instruction through assignment choices that accommodate different learning styles and interests. For example, in pre-calculus, during the study of function transformations, students design their own picture to program the transformations in the calculator. Even though classroom observations provided limited evidence of differentiated instruction within individual lessons, there is ample evidence of a desire of all staff members to make themselves available to personalize instruction outside the classroom. All teachers are available on a regular basis to meet with individual or small groups of students to address individual learning needs. In addition, a staffed math lab is offered throughout the day for students to receive individualized support, and academic support staffed by a special education/regular education teacher is offered every period to all students for additional assistance in any subject area. The many clubs, activities, and the advisory program are other examples of the personalized instruction occurring outside the classroom. The curricula at NRHS does not currently make specific links between and among different disciplines, although many teachers report a desire for this to occur. Individual teachers may initiate interdisciplinary lessons, as evidenced by the English department reading The Great Gatsby at approximately the same time that U.S. history classes are studying the 1920s. Teachers and administrators indicate that the use of Curriculum Mapper will help teachers recognize opportunities to expand interdisciplinary learning. There is evidence that active and self-directed learning is a common practice at NHRS. Classroom visits show that while some lecture-based instruction occurs, students are more commonly

actively engaged in learning. For instance, some mathematics classrooms are set up so that students work in groups to investigate and to solve problems with the teacher acting as a facilitator. An environmental science class lab went outside to investigate new growth plants vs. old growth plants. The English department employs techniques such as peer editing and revision to promote active learning. Inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking were evident in classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student work. Some teachers start each class by posting an essential question for the daily lesson. However, classroom observations indicate that initiation and closure of lessons are inconsistent. The social studies department emphasizes the use of document-based questions that require students to develop a thesis concerning primary source documents. Many of these inquiry-based lessons also foster personalized instruction by allowing students to create their own essential questions and to develop their own responses through inquiry and research. An example of this is the history term paper that is required of all honors/AP and college prep students in their junior year. English teachers use essential questions from the curriculum to focus on major themes in literature that call for higher order thinking and are applied to current issues. Most of the math and science curriculum and instruction is inquiry based. Inquiry-based learning is evident in many departments in the school. It is abundantly clear that the instructional practices of teachers at NRHS support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. Whether it be civics students writing to their congressman about individually researched topics, mathematics students at all levels analyzing credit card amortizations, science students creating informational pamphlets on infectious disease, biomes, and skin disorders, agricultural students completing work experiences, or students working at an in-school bank, students are engaged in applying what they know to real world scenarios. Students, parents, and teachers all report through the Endicott survey, interviews, and observations that students are engaged in self-assessment and reflection.

The survey indicates 71.7 percent of students report that teachers provide them with opportunities to assess their own work. Students evaluate themselves through school-wide and course-specific rubrics that emphasize the school's core values. Students are taught that self-assessment is part of becoming lifelong learners. There is some evidence that teachers ask students to write about how they would make improvements or changes to their work and, in some cases, that teachers give students the opportunity to revise their work for credit. For example, a teacher reported that in the honors human physiology course, part of the final exam asks students to explain how one lesson or unit was geared to their individual learning styles and how another unit or lesson was not. NRHS teachers have been observed making significant strides in integrating technology into their instructional practices. Some training has been provided in technology integration, but teachers express the need for additional training to refine and extend current skills. Teachers have pursued technological education on their own time to meet the technological needs of the students. Teachers feel they need to model the efficient and ethical use of technological skills that students require. In an effort to facilitate this process, a middle school teacher has been given a one-year sabbatical to work with high school teachers in implementing technological initiatives. Teachers report that this assistance is integral in their development and their ability to apply what they learn to instruction. Virtually all written assignments require students to use word-processing via the use of computers either at home or at school. SMARTBoards are available in many classrooms, and those teachers who use them report more active student engagement. Some teachers have been employing Web 2.0 resources such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other social networks, but these teachers were not in the majority. Haiku, a K through12 learning management system implemented in the fall of 2012, should allow all teachers to improve student communication and web-based lesson planning. U.S. history and English use resources such as Turnitin.com and Noodlebib to evaluate writing and to improve research ethics. Mathematics teachers use classroom computers, graphing calculators, Sketchpad, SMARTBoards, and LCD projectors to graph mathematical equations, display mathematical problems, make inductive discoveries in a lesson and write their own conjectures based on the data. Other technologies and software are employed in various electives where appropriate. World language classes are moving away from using a traditional language lab to using a mobile iPod cart for accessing teacher-designed

speaking activities using media such as pictures, videos, and dialogue boxes in order to record verbal responses. Students submit their work via e-mail to the teacher for feedback, and students then have the opportunity to re-record the verbal responses in order to improve their speaking skills. In special education, iPads are available to students who have dysgraphia in order to keep up with writing assignments and note taking in all their classes. Dragonspeak allows students to use their verbal skills instead of writing skills to demonstrate their cognitive ability. Teachers generally recognize that integrating technology into their instruction means more than using a computer and equipment. To this end, teachers want more time to observe their peers who are meaningfully integrating technology into lessons, and more time set aside to collaborate with their peers about these practices. Inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking opportunities are evident in many classes along with the use of authentic tasks and technology to enhance and improve instruction, however this needs to be happening in all classes at all levels. Once teachers strategically differentiate beyond materials within the classroom to accommodate individual student needs, instruction will be more effective for all students. (teachers, parents, students, administrators, teacher interviews, classroom observations, self-study committee, student shadowing, school board, Endicott survey, evidence bins)

While teachers at NRHS adjust their educational practices to meet the overall needs of classes by using formative assessments during instructional time, differentiation for the specific needs of individuals within the class is facilitated primarily through altering the expectations or extending the timeline of a project or assignment rather than modifying the work in accordance with student needs. Teachers provide additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom to meet learning style needs. Most teachers regularly adjust their instructional practices to meet the individual needs of students, primarily through the use of additional support outside class time and by suggesting alternative strategies within their lessons. The core classes are divided into various levels: AP/UCONN, honors, college, general, and co-taught. Levels of differentiation vary by department. Science and world language do not have a general level. The social studies department combines its college and honors levels in the freshman year, with additional optional work for the honors students within those classes and a heterogeneously grouped civics class. There is evidence that students can easily move between levels and are often encouraged to do so. In addition, parents can override teacher recommendations to place their children in a higher level of a particular course. Most elective classes are heterogeneously grouped. Observations reveal inconsistent behavioral and academic expectations in general level classes. Students report that the most rigorous and on-task general classes are their math classes. NRHS schedules two formal sessions for extra-help each week; an academic support class and a math lab are open during every period to all students. Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI) has been implemented within this structure. The first level of intervention for students having difficulty is within the classroom. Then, if a student is at-risk of falling behind, a teacher, parent, school counselor, or student can initiate an SRBI referral. In SRBI tiers two and three, out-of-class resources can be added in the form of academic support periods, prescribed extra-help with the classroom teacher, or regular use of the math lab. Most NHRS teachers use formative assessments on a daily basis to assess the general understanding of the group and to inform instruction.

Many teachers provide students with specific and immediate feedback regarding their progress through the use of questioning and classroom discussions. For example, in Law and Justice, the Socratic method is used regularly to assess students' knowledge and to apply it to authentic case scenarios. In mathematics classes, after investigating or presenting a new concept or skill, students practice in class and on homework assignments to further develop their understanding of the process or concepts. Some teachers give ungraded exit cards at the end of an activity and use them to check in on student progress, emphasizing to students that this is designed to see how the class is doing with the material. Problems of the day used at the beginning of class assess retention and understanding of material from the previous day. Think-pair-share is another strategy that was observed and described by teachers and students. Additionally, some teachers not only permit but also encourage students to improve their work

either by resubmitting work or by retaking final assessments once students have had the opportunity to address identified areas of weakness. Special education teachers review individual student assessment, often as a part of an Individualized Education Plan, and they provide specific instruction based on what they see in the student's work. Some teachers look at whole-class assessment results and make modifications to their instruction based on what they have learned through this data collection. Many teachers reported regular differentiation to accommodate student learning, but the methods vary and are mostly reported to be in response to personal knowledge and not to data. Teachers purposely differentiate in student expectations. Using a pretest, some teachers regularly assess what students know and can do before teaching. They may use this data to develop learning activities. Some teachers use homework as a formative assessment to determine student pacing. In ceramics, students and the teacher design projects based on each student's skill level. In co-taught general classes, a special education teacher monitors student progress and incorporates multiple modalities into the presentation of the material. In western civilization (college and honors combined) and civics (heterogeneously grouped) classes, an honors challenge is offered to students. College level students all do the same assignments, but students who choose the honors challenge are given enhanced assignments and projects that encourage higher level learning. Most teachers purposefully organize group-learning activities for students. It is unclear whether the organization is based on individual student needs. Teachers have set up their classrooms in order to move easily from whole group, to small group, and to paired activities. At times, teachers strategically pair students to focus on better understanding and collaboration. Most teachers use a variety of methods to pair and/or group students, allowing students to choose their groups at times so they feel they have a voice, but often choosing members of groups in order to mix personalities or to reinforce productivity. The expectation that students can work in a variety of groups encourages students to learn collaborative skills and fosters an understanding that collaboration is an important 21st century skill.

The school has developed a collaboration rubric that teachers use to provide students with regular feedback on their development of these skills. Teachers regularly provide additional support and alternative strategies within the classroom. During class time in math and science, some teachers were observed circulating, observing, and commenting on individual student work to determine individual levels of understanding. Additional instruction to the student, group, or class is based on these observations. In social studies classes, questioning is used to determine the level of student understanding, and the teacher adjusts the instruction accordingly. Teachers report that they pair students strategically for maximum learning by matching high-level learners with low-level learners. In this way, students take responsibility for their own learning and teachers become facilitators of student-directed learning. Use of exemplars of prior student work provides students with concrete examples of acceptable final products. Teacher demonstrations of science lab techniques are used to clarify processes or correct misuse of materials. For classes with paraprofessional support, teachers often meet with the educational assistant to clarify lesson objectives and specific areas in which students will likely need additional support. When the faculty organizes and routinely uses a formalized method of using data to inform instruction, students will have a consistent opportunity to meet the learning expectations in school-wide rubrics. (teachers, self-study, panel presentation, teacher interviews, self-study panel, Endicott survey, classroom observations, evidence bins)

Teachers at NRHS individually and, in some departments, collaboratively, work to improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments and also examine current research and engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice. Examining student work and using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, supervisors, and parents is done by individual teachers or by PLCs within some departments, but is not systemic. The school has adopted a number of models for the use of available meeting time that provides the opportunities for teachers, individually and collaboratively, to improve their instructional practices. NRHS offers formal time for departments to meet with the specific goal of examining assessment data from a variety of sources. Core

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academic departments analyze CAPT and CMT data to improve instructional practices. For example, biology and integrated science teachers developed a unit-pacing guide for both courses. Biology teachers developed focus fact sheets to review concepts and skills for each unit based on CAPT scores and on the CT Science Frameworks. The biology midterm and final exam mirror the format of the science CAPT test. Freshman and sophomore English model their exams after CAPT-like assessments. The math department reviews the CAPT scores and the corresponding questions, adjusting the curriculum in response to areas that reveal student weaknesses. While this data is summative rather than formative, teachers report that changes in instructional practices that occurred after reviewing summative results have led to improved student performance. The review of formative assessment data is done on an individual basis by each teacher. NRHS has set aside limited formal time for teachers to work collaboratively to examine student work. Four years ago, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) were initiated to facilitate discussion of instructional strategies at the department level. Forty-five minutes per month were originally allocated after school for teachers to collaboratively examine student work and to develop collaborative lessons and assessments using the UBD model already in place. Some of this time has been used for NEASC preparation and other initiatives; the intention is to return to using the time as originally intended. The new Curriculum Mapper and Haiku initiatives have taken much of the time not used for NEASC preparation in the last two years. The mathematics department PLCs and the freshman and sophomore social studies PLCs meet regularly on their own time to examine student work, plan common lessons, formative and summative assessments, and work on curriculum revision. NRHS's teachers report working to improve their instructional practices on an informal and limited basis by visiting classrooms and offering feedback on new student-centered classroom activities. Other teachers exchange written inquiry-based lessons with peers to get feedback prior to implementation. As part of the Teacher Evaluation And Mentoring (TEAM) induction program, new teachers have the opportunity to observe veteran teachers to see effective instructional practices.

Some teachers use surveys at the end of the school year to solicit student feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher's instructional practices. There are very few instances of teachers asking for feedback from parents. This is evidenced by parental response on the Endicott survey. When asked whether teachers ask them for feedback about instructional practices only 10.4 percent of parents agreed. Feedback teachers receive from their immediate supervisor varies greatly from department to department. Some teachers feel that they receive ample support and suggestions from their department chairpersons, who are now required to have their 092 certification and perform formal observations and evaluations. Other teachers report that their supervisor has not visited their classroom in the last several years. Teachers express an interest in the administration's feedback on specific classroom practices. The use of current research varies by department and occasionally is used on a school-wide basis. New teachers are required to gain new learning from current research to improve their classroom instructional practices as part of the new teacher induction program. The social studies department reports that it uses a variety of approaches to instructional practices in response to the Multiple Intelligences theory. Many departments read trade journals to learn about current teaching practices in their disciplines, and those ideas are incorporated into the curriculum. For example, the math department read The Teaching Gap outside of school time and used the ideas in the book to design master lessons for the department. Teachers report that they are given the opportunity to attend outside professional development to inform best practices. NHRS plans and implements four days of professional development time per year providing teachers the opportunity for collegial discussions focused on curriculum, instructional practice, and assessment techniques, along with training in various technology initiatives. Some time at the regular monthly faculty meetings is dedicated to discussing workshops colleagues have attended and how they may be of value to the entire staff. Departments also meet monthly and use this dedicated time to discuss, develop, and implement new strategies and/or work on curriculum. When teacher evaluation, PLCs and other professional development activities are formally planned and coordinated to achieve the core values of NRHS, their effectiveness will improve. (teachers, self-study, panel presentation, teacher interviews, self-study panel, classroom observations, evidence bins)

As adult learners and reflective practitioners, teachers maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Teachers as adult learners maintain their expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practice in a variety of ways. Teachers conduct reflection formally through professional development time, PLC time, and informally through conversations with colleagues, students, and administrators. New practices and techniques are brought into all departments through the reading of professional journals such as Physics Teacher and School Arts. The social studies department has brought in guest speakers for the topics of geography and reading. The math department read The Teaching Gap, which pertains to inquiry-based learning and uses Mathematics Teacher to gather ideas for projects. Teachers are also encouraged to take advantage of professional learning opportunities that are offered at a variety of locations. Different math teachers attend the ATOMIC conference each year and several are attending the Regional NCTM conference in Hartford in October 2012. Science teachers have attended the NSTA Regional Conference. The technology education department attends workshops for the use of new computer programs, such as Google Sketchup. Vocational coordinators attend conferences pertaining to transitional planning that is consistent with 21st century skills. Teachers have recently learned to use a wide variety of Internet resources, such as Mathisfun.com, Teachability.com, DiscoveryEducation.com, Prezi, WeVideo, and other Web 2.0 tools to enhance their content-specific instructional practices. Professional development time has also been used to develop and revise UBD units and lesson plans. Content- specific instructional practices and content are discussed. Non-content specific strategies, such as the effective use of technology and data collection, are shared between departments during professional development time. However, teachers indicate that these formal meetings are not sufficient and the effectiveness of the meetings varies from department to department. All departments meet informally in smaller learning groups to reflect on and to fill in gaps in learning practices and content. Tenured teachers conduct action research projects every three years. These projects are centered on content and non-content learning strategies. Data is collected and formal reports on the effectiveness of these strategies are presented to the administration. It is unclear whether these projects are used to provide professional development for other teachers. Teachers report differing levels of feedback. Some teachers feel the need for self-evaluation obtained by regular collection of student work in portfolios with a plan for self-reflection as a formal part of the evaluation plan would ensure consistent best practice throughout the school. Individual teachers perform all such work informally. When teacher evaluation is revised to reflect best practice and formalized throughout the school, teaching and learning, as well as instructional practices will be consistently applied in all classrooms. (teachers, self-study, teacher interviews, self-study panel, classroom observations, evidence bins)

Commendations:

1. The dedication and willingness of teachers to embrace the technology being introduced in their instruction at all levels
2. The willingness of all staff members to maintain their expertise in their content area through professional development offered in-house and through outside workshops
3. The use of inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking in many courses
4. The many classes that promote knowledge and skills through the use of authentic tasks and group learning opportunities
5. The individual teachers who are adept at differentiating student expectations and extending timelines in accordance with student needs
6. The implementation of Scientific Research Based Intervention

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement formal procedures that will allow faculty discussion of student work and

instructional strategies to become a significant part of the professional culture of the school

2. Ensure that the teacher supervision and evaluation process focuses on improving instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs

3. Formalize the use of common assessments, both formative and summative, to ensure that all students meet the identified learning expectations and 21st century learning skills

4. Develop and implement a plan to improve instructional practices through feedback from a variety of sources, including students, supervisors, and parents

4 | Assessment of and for Student Learning

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, based on school-wide rubrics, to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

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 the corresponding rubrics.

6. In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments.

7. Teachers collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments.

8. Teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work.

9. Teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning.

10. Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, including all of the following:
    - student work
    - common course and common grade-level assessments
    - individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 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.

Conclusions

The plan to assess whole-school achievement of each of the school's 21st century learning expectations has yet to be fully implemented. This is the first year that data will formally be recorded in Power School. Prior to this year, all teachers identified, by course, two of the rubrics with which they would assess their students. All teachers are required to assess every student and input the data quarterly. For example, English teachers regularly employ the use of the critical thinking and writing rubrics as part of their assessment practice. Science and agriculture education teachers have taken responsibility for providing students with feedback on the collaboration and problem-solving rubrics. The school-wide expectations assessed by every course are published in the program of studies, posted in some classrooms, and appear in the majority of course overviews. Across the school, teachers report students' progress toward meeting learning expectations. The formal process to ensure that each student is being assessed regularly on all of the school-wide expectations is new, and its implementation is limited. As a result, several teachers have expressed concern regarding their readiness to report the first quarterly assessment. Timely implementation of the formal assessment process will result in consistent and effective school-wide progress toward meeting all learning expectations. (self-study, classroom observations, student work, teacher and tech support interviews)

The school is committed to providing written feedback to all students and their families related to their individual progress in each of the 21st century learning expectations. Communication to students and families consists of the rating of individual performance based on a scale of advanced, goal, proficient, basic, and below basic for each particular school-wide learning expectation. However, the process by which it will be communicated is new and not fully developed. Across the school, teachers are committed to providing individual feedback to their students. For example, math teachers utilize the problem-solving and writing rubrics in course projects on student assessment. The creativity rubric is effectively incorporated into the Agriculture Education program to help reinforce key vocabulary. Many students share that they are becoming familiar with the rubrics through self-assessment of their work. While the school is making strides on communicating the individual achievements, the principal acknowledges that student progress related to school-wide goals needs to be communicated explicitly to parents when this information appears on the quarterly report card. It is also unclear as to how the data on whole-school performance will be assessed and shared with all stakeholders. Although the technical support staff is confident that it will be able to provide the necessary data, the process by which this information will be generated in Power School is ongoing. When a communication plan to share student achievement data with all stakeholders in a meaningful and deliberate way the 21st century learning expectations will become embedded in the school culture and improve student learning. (self-study, student work, student interviews, teacher grade books, teacher and tech support interviews)

Teachers collect, disaggregate, and analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. However, it appears that their perceptions are based on informal data and not the result of implementation the new process that is being developed to report school-wide expectations. The school responds to inequities in student achievement in a variety of ways. Academic support programs available to all students include a math lab staffed by teachers during the school day, and scheduled extra help sessions are offered to all students after school in all disciplines. Ninth grade teachers created and utilize an electronic document in which they share concerns about struggling freshmen. A Scientific Research Based Intervention (SRBI) program was developed, and administrators, school counselors, psychologist, social workers, and teachers meet to identify students and design interventions to meet their needs. The documents used for this process incorporate data on standardized assessments, but not on every school-wide learning expectation. Professional Learning Communities meet

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monthly by department. In the Endicott survey, 67 percent of the staff reports that they spend time collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing data to respond to inequities in student achievement. However, the majority of teachers report that in recent years this time has been spent on school initiatives that include curriculum mapping. Many teachers indicate that they would prefer to utilize this formal time to collaborate on their instructional and assessment practices. There is limited time devoted to analyzing data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Informally, across the school, teachers meet with colleagues to discuss student work through the lens of the school's learning expectations. They review formative and summative assessments and adjust their instructional and assessment practices accordingly. For example, the math department collaborates weekly to maintain high expectations in all levels, which was evident in classroom observations and student interviews. While the general level has been collapsed successfully in the science and social studies departments, four homogenous levels maintained in some areas places the onus of responsibility for interventions on basic instruction and special education referrals. For example, special education paraprofessionals are assigned only to general education classes. This practice supports the perception that not all students can achieve at high levels by denying them access to college preparation courses. Furthermore, the four homogeneous levels found in most courses do not align with the core values of the school. A more formalized, frequent schedule for teachers to collaborate as well as training in instructional pedagogy focused on heterogeneous groupings will reduce the perception of inequity found in the current academic program. (teacher interviews, RTI documents, self-study, parent interviews, student shadowing, Endicott survey)

Explicit communication to students about the applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific learning goals to be assessed prior to each unit of study is inconsistent. In the 2011 Endicott survey, approximately 60 percent of the students, staff, and parents indicates that this practice occurs. However, it appears to be implemented by individual teacher rather than deliberately and with common purpose. Most teachers point out the appropriate learning expectations prior to each unit of study by referencing the posters in the room. Students cite that there are occasions when teachers specify the rubrics that will be used in the course, post the essential questions, and incorporate school-wide learning expectations into their course documents. Others also state that there is a lack of emphasis on what they are expected to know and be able to do prior to the units of study. The collective practice by the staff of previewing each unit of study with their classes contributes to the students' academic success. When provided with the applicable 21st century learning expectation and unit specific learning goals prior to teaching, students have a better understanding of what they are expected to know and be able to do and have a greater chance of meeting those expectations. (Endicott survey, student interviews, self-study)

Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics. According to the Endicott survey, 77.6 percent of the students and 85.2 percent of the teachers indicate that rubrics are an integral part of the summative assessment process. Student and teacher interviews further support this conclusion. Although teachers identify two learning expectations and corresponding rubrics per course, it appears that in many of the student work samples, course-specific rubrics play a greater role in the determination of numerical grades. The school-wide rubrics provide additional qualitative feedback. The consistent use of rubrics will provide students with a clear understanding of what is expected of them, give them a tool to self-assess their work prior to submission, and contribute to the achievement of unit goals and school learning expectations. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, student interviews)

In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments, but this practice is inconsistent across the school. While there is an indication that there are teachers who employ formative assessments regularly and effectively, it is not evident across levels and disciplines. There are teachers who assess learning through daily observation, conversations with individual students and groups,

check-ins at the close of class, and dip-sticking; this was apparent in observations. Math teachers were observed checking on student progress during multi-step problems and reviewing key concepts at the end of class with the purpose of monitoring student comprehension. A world language teacher incorporated "do now" activities at the beginning of class to differentiate homework assignments. Agriculture education teachers utilize formative assessments focusing on safety throughout their four-year program. In classroom observations and subsequent discussions with teachers, limited common understanding of what is expected of them in order to utilize the results of formative results was reported. Teachers shared a variety of approaches regarding student revision of assignments from requiring, to encouraging, to disallowing such revisions. The English and social studies departments incorporate the revision process into most of their assignments in all levels. Student interviews indicate that there are limited opportunities for revisions in honors and AP level classes for math and science, while other students complete revisions for science projects. The Endicott survey reveals a range of impressions: 97 percent of staff, 72 percent of students, and 66 percent of parents answered yes when asked if teachers employ a range of assessment strategies. The student work samples provide a variety of assessments, which indicates that as a whole school there is variety, but the student and parent data suggest that perhaps individual students do not always experience this variety. Numerous examples of teachers providing exemplars for assignments/projects were found. In writing workshop students were shown examples of high quality college essays before making final revisions to their own; AP Statistics students were shown examples of completed projects from previous years in order to better understand what their final product should look like and teachers of the honors sections of the sophomore English class routinely use exemplars for essays. Frequent use of formative assessment techniques can help teachers recalibrate their lesson plans to ensure that all students are learning. The opportunity to revise work reinforces the concept of life-long learning, helps develop the willingness to take risks, provides slower learners the opportunity to achieve success, and shifts the role of the teacher from a judge to a coach. By utilizing a range of assessment strategies it will allow students to demonstrate their learning through a variety of formats. (student work, Endicott survey, student interviews)

Teachers collaborate regularly, although not typically in formal ways, on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. The school provides Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting time after school once a month from 2:15pm-3:00pm. In recent years this time has been focused on entering information into Curriculum Mapper and not on collaboration regarding assessments. The daily school schedule does not have built-in time to ensure the opportunity for collaboration, and the faculty reports that most of their collaboration takes place ad hoc during the day or informally after school, thus contributing to the 78 percent of staff that reports they meet about assessments, but only 60 percent of them reports that they have formal time to do so. Teachers claim that during these informal meetings they compare student performance on assessments, including common assessments, in order to revise both their instructional strategies and the assessments. The faculty indicates that many common assessments exist in most of the departments, although some teachers report that their departments do not offer common assessments in their courses. Based on teacher interviews, the faculty has discussed how well the school-wide rubrics are being used in the classroom and they believe it is time for the rubrics to undergo a revision process. A revision effort is in the planning for next school year according to a few faculty members. When NRHS dedicates formal time for teachers to collaborate regularly about assessments, it will demonstrate that the school values this time as an important component of the educational process. (Endicott survey, teachers, self-study)

Although there is evidence that the majority of teachers provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback of work, it is not consistently applied with the purpose of revision and improvement. The Endicott survey indicates 63 percent of students agrees that teachers offer suggestions to help them improve their schoolwork. English essays, social studies research papers, and some science projects have the revision process embedded in the assessment process through the use of multiple drafts and TurnItIn.com. Art teachers incorporate this practice through the

display of artwork that is subjected to peer and teacher critiques. Following constructive feedback, students are encouraged to improve and resubmit the project as a summative assessment. However, students in other courses report that the opportunity and expectation for revision does not frequently exist; once an assignment is graded, they move on to the next concept. Students report that teachers consistently review the results of summative assessments including unit tests and midterms providing feedback to students prior to beginning a new unit of study. When specific feedback is routinely utilized to revise and improve student work it fosters academic and personal excellence in every student, which is a core value of the school. (Endicott survey, student interviews, teacher interviews, student work)

The use of formative assessment to inform and adapt instructional practices for the purpose of improving student learning is inconsistent across the school. The math department meets on a weekly basis to discuss and review formative assessments, and student representatives of all levels and courses report that instruction is consistently challenging and engaging. Although 91.7 percent of the teachers believes that they use student achievement data to improve their instructional practices, classroom observations throughout the school found that many teachers who use formative assessments during class do not use this information to revise their instructional approach. In addition, only 60 percent of teachers reports formal opportunities to examine student work to improve their instructional practices. Increasing the formal opportunities for all teachers to frequently collaborate for the expressed purpose of using formative assessment results to determine changes in instructional practices will improve student learning. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, student interviews, classroom observations)

While teachers individually and collaborative spend time examining a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of improving student learning, the school provides insufficient time for this process and lacks the formal involvement of the building administrators. As previously noted, departmental Professional Learning Communities meet monthly. Under the direction of the department chairs, teachers examine the results of standardized assessments in order to revise curriculum and improve instructional practices. Department chairs have access to grade 8 CMT scores as well as CAPT, AP, and SAT results and have the responsibility to lead the analysis process. However the use of this PLC time for review of common course and grade-level assessments and curriculum revision has been replaced by other initiatives such as curriculum documentation. Teachers of common courses discuss the results of the school-wide rubrics for which they are responsible; however, the data collection process has only formally begun this school year. It appears that students are not regularly surveyed for their opinions about how teachers can improve instruction; the Endicott survey indicates that only 31.2 percent of the students is asked for their ideas or opinions. Monthly PLC time is insufficient to examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and revising instructional practice. Student input is a valuable component of this work and providing students the opportunity to be heard is a core belief of this school. It is essential that the building administrators participate in the PLC process and work collaboratively with department chairs and teachers to ensure that there is a consistent message and plan for these expectations. (Endicott survey, teacher interviews, student interviews, department leaders)

Although grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed, there is little evidence to indicate that they are regularly revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The majority of teachers in common courses collaborate both formally and more often, informally, to review their grading practices. The Endicott survey reports that 63.3 percent of teachers regularly review and revise their grading practices. When the technology team discovered an inconsistency in the way teachers recorded final grades in Power School, it was addressed immediately. It appears that grading and reporting practices are not regularly revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. It should be noted that the school has recently established the structure by which teachers will report student achievement on the school-wide rubrics quarterly. In addition the faculty acknowledges the need to revise the rubrics in the near future. The

regular review and revision of grading and reporting practices and their alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning are essential to ensure that they are actively reflected in the culture of the school and drive curriculum, assessment, and instruction in every classroom. (Endicott survey, self-study, teacher interviews)

Commendations:

1. The formalization of the process by which all teachers assess students in two school-wide rubrics
2. The ability to utilize Power School to monitor and track individual achievement of the learning expectations
3. The rubrics that are an integral component of the summative assessment process across the school
4. The exemplar work samples used as models for student assignments
5. The faculty that is dedicated and willing to create ad hoc and informal opportunities to collaborate
6. The review of summative assessment results before beginning a new unit of study
7. The examination of standardized test results to improve instruction

Recommendations:

1. Incorporate into the formal process a way by which all students are assured regular assessment on every learning expectation and that this data informs instruction for learning
2. Develop and implement a plan to inform how students and their families of individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
3. Develop and implement a plan for whole-school achievement of 21st century learning expectations to be reported to all stakeholders
4. Allocate appropriate formal time for teachers to collaborate on data analysis and use it to respond to inequities in achievement
5. Communicate consistently and explicitly the objectives, school-wide learning expectations, related unit-specific learning goals, and assessments prior to every unit of study in the school
6. Evaluate the assessments used in individual courses and continue to increase the variety of assessment type
7. Provide training on the effective use of formative assessments to inform instruction
8. Develop a plan by which the grading and reporting practices will be reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning

SUPPORT STANDARDS

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

5 School Culture and Leadership

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

1. The school community consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning and results in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all.

2. The school is equitable, inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core course (English/language arts, social studies, math, science, or world languages).

3. There is a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the 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.

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 expectations for all students. The NRHS Student Handbook includes the school's core values and beliefs within the first few pages and they are visible throughout the school building, however, little evidence exists to suggest that teachers use the school-wide rubrics as a way to assess students' social responsibility. One English teacher planned to use the school-wide collaborative rubric for student peer-assessments after a group video project. There are a number of school activities and organizations that foster a positive learning environment including, but not limited to Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), Helping Others Promote Equality (H.O.P.E.), Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), and student mentors. The Rachel's Challenge Program (REACT) is another program that promotes a safe learning environment for all students by providing those involved with social and emotional education that is both colorblind and culturally relevant. Furthermore, teachers and staff members involved with REACT are instructed on how to inspire, equip, and empower students to affect permanent and positive change in the school. Additionally, student mentoring is a strong program that encourages students to help their peers in order to achieve academic success and to build meaningful relationships. As part of this program, National Honor Society students are available during their free time during and after the school day to offer students support; this program has been in existence for at least the past six years. An informal avenue for students to express their concerns to their housemasters is referred to as an "open-door policy". It was also mentioned in an interview with a housemaster that students are "good school citizens" who take care of and look after their peers. Based on student interviews and the Endicott survey, 81.9 percent of students feels safe at school. Ninety-five percent of staff members and 82.2 percent of parents believe the school's culture is safe, positive, and supportive. However, 54.3 percent of students agrees with the statement "teachers respect students", 45.5 percent of students agrees with the statement, "students respect teachers," and 38.3 percent of students agrees that they respect one another. To address these concerns, the principal formed a School Climate Committee in June 2011. Issues addressed by the School Climate Committee include school policies, student behavior, dress code, cell phone policy, and litter. The procedure by which students refer school climate concerns to the Social Climate Committee are not clearly understood by some students. NRHS's Core Values and Beliefs are communicated to students through their student agendas and numerous posters around the school. Teachers express that core values and beliefs come alive in the classrooms. The principal also uses social media to communicate with students and with the school community at large. A Parent/Guardian Handbook includes information on how to get involved in the school and it also outlines school policies; this handbook is available online and in the school's main office. Photocopies are also available to parents during the annual Open House. Both the Student and Parent Handbooks clearly outline policies regarding attendance and discipline. Based on discipline reports, a housemaster reported the amount of documented infractions decreased from 26 pages in 2010-2011 to 23 pages of referrals in 2011-2012 for one of the two houses. Each house and housemaster are responsible for overseeing and documenting the behavior infractions within their houses, except for cases of bullying which need to be tracked in a separate location by the principal due to recently implemented state mandates. Housemasters keep track of all infractions for four years so that seniors are held accountable for their behavior during their entire school career at NRHS. It is evident that the culture among students and staff is safe and supportive, and that initiatives have been put in place to further promote a positive learning environment. (Endicott survey, teacher and administrative interviews, evidence, observations)

Efforts are in place to ensure the school is equitable, all-inclusive, and fosters heterogeneity where every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core

course. Courses including Introduction to Art, Popular Music, P.E., Environmental Science, Forensic Science, and Psychology are examples of heterogeneously grouped classes. Most special education students are placed in general or college prep courses if it is determined to be appropriate. Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, the social studies department requires all 10th graders to take a semester-long, half-credit, heterogeneous civics course. According to the Endicott survey, only 41.7 percent of the staff members agrees that the school requires every student, over the course of the high school experience, to enroll in a minimum of one heterogeneously grouped core courses. Seventy-eight percent of students agrees with the same statement. When heterogeneous opportunities are developed for all students, equity and access will be achieved. (teacher interviews, student interviews, program of studies)

There is a formal, ongoing program through which each NRHS student is given the opportunity to connect with an adult in the school, in addition to his/her school counselor, who knows the student well and who assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. During the second quarter of the 2011-2012 school year, NRHS implemented a formal advisory program that meets bi-monthly. The advisory group is a place where every student makes a connection with at least one adult, a place where students and faculty get to know each other in a small group setting, and a place where advisees develop constructive peer relationships. Teachers view the advisory not only as a way to connect with students and to foster connections among students, but also they see it as a time to inform students about what is going on in school. Twenty-first century learning topics such as cyber-bullying and digital citizenship are included in advisory activities. As of March 2011, 31.8 percent of students agrees that their school has an advisory program which provides them with an adult in the school, in addition to their guidance counselor, with whom they meet regularly and who knows them well. Thirty-three percent of staff members and nearly 27 percent of parents agree with the aforementioned statement. Because the advisory program was instituted during the last academic year, these numbers are likely to improve. Topics addressed in the advisory program include but are not limited to healthy relationships, helping students learn how to talk to people they do not know, and 21st century learning topics of cyber-bullying and digital citizenship. Additionally, ice-breakers are used to encourage interaction among the randomly organized student groups. According to teacher interviews, the next step for the program will be to level activities by grade in order to provide students with topics relevant to their grade level. There is a Student Advisory Committee lead by one of the housemasters who is responsible for organizing instructional binders for teachers to use during the advisory blocks. A student advisory memo exists, which defines goals for the program, and provides guidelines for both teachers and students. A formal memo dated December 9, 2011 was sent home to parents informing them of the implementation of the advisory program. The school's implementation of an advisory program will foster positive relationships and provide another opportunity for students to connect with adults in the building outside of academic settings. Because a formal advisory program is in place more students and teachers will build meaningful, respectful relationships. (teacher interviews, student interviews, parent groups)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the professional staff engage in formal and informal professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning on a regular basis. The vast majority of teachers express a collaborative spirit of reflection and inquiry, though most collaboration is informal and occurs outside of scheduled collaboration time. Conversations among teachers address common learning objectives, instructional practices, especially in the realm of technology, and curriculum revision as it relates the Curriculum Mapping software. Additionally, the introduction of the PLC model (ten meetings per year) and the monthly department meetings (ten per year) provide teachers with time to engage in professional discourse. Each department head organizes the PLC agendas. The principal often introduces the latest professional development initiatives, but there is very little evidence of consistent implementation. Teachers feel that one monthly PLC is not enough time to collaborate effectively with their colleagues, and the current PLC model requires teacher to stay after school to meet with other teachers in their departments. The

math department chooses to meet on a weekly basis to collaborate with colleagues who teach common courses; either before or after school, math teachers meet to plan common assessments and common objectives since the monthly PLC meetings do not provide sufficient time for effective implementation of best practices. Though there is limited, formal time set up for teacher collaboration, there is evidence of regular reflection, inquiry and analysis of teaching and learning. Because the math department meets frequently, they were able to develop a study guide system after math teachers concluded that students had a difficult time studying for math exams. According to teacher interviews, teachers who participate in co-taught classes do not have common planning time during school and often interact informally with their co-teachers. In the past two years, much of the professional development time has been NEASC driven. Evidence indicates that between the dates of July 11, 2010 and February 9, 2011, CEU credits were awarded to different faculty members in the following areas: career education, curriculum development process, effective teaching and instructional strategies, guidance and counseling, special education, intermediate administration and supervision, and elementary, middle, and high school technology. NRHS dedicates formal time for professional development, but very little time is provided for formal implementation. Teachers express that new initiatives including Haiku and Curriculum Mapper have been introduced to teachers by administration, but that there is not enough time given to input data into Curriculum Mapper or to familiarize faculty with specific ways the Haiku software assists with student learning. Additionally, some faculty members have been given SMARTBoards for their classrooms but report limited training on their use. When professional development and evaluation are aligned with best practice and core values, student achievement will improve. (faculty interviews, evidence box, self-study)

Department chairs use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning but teachers report inconsistent timely and helpful feedback to help them improve their practice. Tenured teachers are required to create an action research project every three years. Novice teachers are required to establish goals and are observed each year by their department heads. The goals of these non- tenured teachers are aligned with the TEAM modules for beginning teachers. In Section C of the teachers' Blue Book, guidelines and procedures for teacher and administrative evaluations and professional development programs are provided. The principal and the housemasters evaluate the department heads, and, according to teacher's Blue Book, "each year the administrators complete a self-inventory, meet with an evaluator to establish goals, and meet twice per year to measure progress". It must be noted that the Performance Evaluation Plan and Professional Development Program have not been updated since July 2001, but the administration provided evidence of upcoming training in the SEED model. There is no consistent plan for tenured teachers, especially when it comes to formal classroom observations, nor are there articulated norms, other than the templates, that the department heads use to maintain consistency across all departments when evaluating teachers. Provided evidence indicates administrators who supervise and evaluate teachers attended twenty-four seminars including Implementing Response to Intervention- A Guide for Schools; Data Teams: Design and Implementation; Unwrapping the Standards; CAPS Conference; Evaluation and Supervision of Teachers (Marzano); Supervision and Evaluation for Administrators; and Effective Teaching and Instructional Strategies. As mentioned in the self-study report, "Despite having different approaches to the specific implementation of teacher evaluation, leaders set high expectations for teacher performance and use of best practice around the classroom"; however, evaluators find the evaluation process to be difficult for them since the process is currently ambiguous. Teachers are aware that the new Teacher Evaluation Plans required by the State of Connecticut to begin in the 2013-2014 school year will dictate the design and function of the new Performance Evaluation Plan. Until then, the current plan for teacher goals and evaluations will remain in place.

As articulated in the Performance Evaluation Plan (PEP) found in the teacher Blue Book, there is "a minimum of one Professional Growth Objective that must align and coordinate with school goals which have been determined by collaboration between the administration and faculty around student learning needs." Additionally, the PEP

dictates that Professional Growth Objectives may be achieved using a variety of methods: peer coaching or consultative support, field-based research, an integrated portfolio, weekly journals, self-analysis of videotapes, or mentoring, among others. Teachers expressed that even though there is a formal evaluation process, inconsistent feedback, reinforcement, or suggestions are provided about their practice in a timely manner and appears to be specific to department leadership. Teachers were unable to cite instructional improvements that directly emanate from supervision and evaluation. According to the principal, a mini-observation protocol is used and was shared with department heads at the first meeting of the 2012-2013 school year. NRHS school administrators provide some walk- through observations that are not perceived by teachers as formal evaluations of their instruction. When the new Connecticut teacher evaluation model is implemented in 2013, a purposeful, effective teacher evaluation procedure will be applied with consistency, and teachers and staff members will begin to receive meaningful feedback on their performance. (teacher evaluation document, teacher interviews, administrator interviews, department meetings)

The organization of time supports research-based instruction, but does not support frequent professional collaboration among teachers. The Professional Learning Committee model was recently introduced in order to move NRHS teachers beyond traditional, professional meeting time. The first Wednesday of each month, from 2:15-3:00 pm, is set aside as PLC meeting day. In panel discussions and teacher interviews, teachers expressed that each department head is responsible for setting the PLC agendas, but there are no school-wide norms about how departments should use PLCs. Much collaboration between and among teachers in and across departments is informal. The self-study report indicates that "the current schedule at NHRS creates inequities among the instructional time between morning and afternoon classes." During group interviews, teachers indicated that instructional time is often lost in the afternoon due to inclement weather, early sports releases, and reading programs at the elementary schools. Also, the current daily schedule was adopted to accommodate student participation in off-campus activities such as ROTC and work study programs. The self-study indicates that there are five students enrolled in ROTC and ten in the work study program. Based on student interviews, the schedule "keeps things different, especially lunches." One rotating long block each week allows for science classes to perform in-depth labs and practicals that the 42-minute class period cannot accommodate. Teachers indicate that the 42-minute blocks with the once a week-long block rotation work well for both teachers and students. Reflection on the current schedule by students and teachers, will provide helpful information in order to maximize student learning. (classroom observation, teacher interviews, student interviews)

The student load and class size enables teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students at Northwestern Regional High School. According to the Endicott survey, only 55 percent of the staff feels that class size is reasonable, but the roster of classes provided by the school indicates that only four classes throughout the year are over-enrolled. Two of these four classes are physical education classes, and the self-study report indicates that this department's staff feels that classes are scheduled with unsafe student limits. At NRHS, 70.1 percent of students feels that class size and load enable teachers to meet their learning needs and 69.3 percent of parents feels this is true. In contrast to the self-study report, class caps are consistently upheld, although teacher interviews indicate that there is no clear policy or procedure for determining class size. Class sizes in the sciences meet state and national guidelines in all cases as evidenced by the class rosters. Reasonable class size enables teachers to better meet the diverse needs of learners in their classroom and to further individualize for student learning needs. (Endicott survey, Power School roster, central office personnel)

The principal, working with other building leaders, is beginning to provide instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The school has had three principals leading the school in the last ten years. As a result of the change in leadership, many initiatives have been brought forward, and according to teacher interviews most have not come to full implementation. However, with new leadership

from the current superintendent and principal, the school worked together to establish their core values, beliefs, and learning expectations involving all stakeholders. The principal has established a major focus on 21st century skill instruction. The principal has asked the department heads to focus on these beliefs by having them work with teachers to integrate specific skills in the classroom. To do this, the principal organized training for technology leaders in the school so that they could train other staff. This "train the trainer" model happens mostly during teacher free time, and some teachers see its usefulness as limited. However, the use of technology, project-based, and authentic assignments and assessments is prevalent in the classrooms. The school's core values and beliefs are posted in every classroom. The principal makes important decisions in alignment with the core values and beliefs of the school. He obtains feedback from all stakeholders involved before making a decision, often re-explaining and clarifying what he has heard, asking for input, and then making a decision that best supports the values of the school. These decisions support learning because they ensure fairness and improve school climate. In fact, in his first year, the principal formed a School Climate Committee to address staff concerns. Once the committee was established, students were asked to join the committee. Based on concerns expressed, action plans were developed and carried out. The principal has brought forward many new initiatives since his promotion to principal. These include replacing data teams with professional learning communities, implementing Curriculum Mapper to track curriculum, designing, creating, and implementing the use of common rubrics, initiating the use of the Haiku program to track homework and assignments, developing school Advisory, and installing SMARTBoards and expectations that teachers use them for instruction. The school is considering implementing Power IT for schedules and website management for the school and teachers. The Endicott survey indicates that 81.7 percent of the staff believes that the principal provides instructional leadership, and it is clear that staff is dedicated to providing rich and authentic experiences for students. The principal reports that he spends his time in the hallways meeting with kids engaging in discussion about grades and homework, writing letters to teachers, students, and parents about positive academic progress, and working with housemasters to conduct mini-evaluations with feedback to teachers.

However, in interviews with teachers, they indicate that they are faced with so many initiatives that most are not being implemented effectively. Many teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the number of new initiatives and do not feel there is adequate follow-through to support implementation. Teachers report that the once-a-month PLC time is provided to learn about these initiatives, to complete work on data analysis, to learn about technology, to design and refine common assessments, to prepare artifacts for this study, and to devise ways to teach students about the core values and beliefs. Department heads are charged with setting the agenda of PLCs with teacher input. As a result of all these initiatives underway simultaneously, many teachers feel overwhelmed. On the Endicott survey, students report that the principal is clear about what he wants to accomplish 61.6 percent of the time, indicating that the plan for the school is not understood by nearly 40 percent of students. When students were asked about their understanding of the core values and beliefs, they could answer questions in very general terms but expressed limited understanding of the meaning behind the values and the implications for them as students and learners. Many students reported that the school began to pay attention to the core values and beliefs just prior to the accreditation visit. The principal has identified the number of initiatives currently underway and those coming soon as the greatest challenge the school faces, and specifically pointed to advisory as the place where students will become more acquainted with the core values and beliefs in the near future. When the principal and the other school leaders, including teachers, provide focus on student learning based on the core values and beliefs, the school's stakeholders can be confident that all students will have equitable learning opportunities designed to help them reach their individual potential. (central office personnel, teachers, students, standards report, classroom observations, student shadow, department representatives, department heads, school tour, Endicott survey)

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Teachers, students, and parents are involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision-making that promote responsibility and ownership across the school. The Endicott survey indicated that 70 percent of the teachers felt that students, teachers and parents were meaningfully involved in decisions and 59.94 percent of parents reporting that to be true; 38.1 percent of students reported involvement in decision-making. As a reaction to these results, the principal formed a School Climate Committee. This committee began its work addressing immediate staff concerns (dress code, cell phone use, language), but it quickly expanded to include student input. Surveys of the entire study body were collected to measure needs; consequently, action plans were developed to resolve problems. Additionally, students participated in the creation of the school's mission statement, and core values and beliefs. They participated in interview committees for the new principal and the choral director, and served on a leadership committee. As a result of this and other new initiatives, the teachers report that the administration is open and supportive. Students have had further input through several surveys used in decision-making. These survey topics address food, safety issues, respect by administration, and respect by teachers. With the creation of the Parent Advocacy Committee, parent involvement has increased. Also, two students have joined the Board of Education as non-voting members, and parents contribute to the school operations through Project Graduation, the Highlander Fund, and the School Climate Committee. Parents were also participants in the development of the mission statement and core values and beliefs. The principal conducts an annual Open House, walks the hallways, chats with students in the cafeteria, meets with teachers informally, and attends many extra-curricular events at which he engages parents in conversation. When all stakeholders are heard and become involved in the decision-making processes of the school in meaningful ways, there is a shared sense of ownership in the school. (self-study, teachers, central office staff, principal, students, parents, Endicott survey)

Teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to the increase in student engagement in learning at Northwestern Regional High School. The school has a large number of clubs, teams, organizations, and student supports most of which have been created by teacher effort and leadership in the building. Among teacher led organizations are Culinary Club, Gay-Straight Alliance, Math Team, Mock Trial, New England Math League, Newspaper Club, Fishing Club, and Student Senate. The art teacher led her students in an effort to beautify the school with murals and sculptures for the campus. A business teacher created a Banking Club which eventually resulted in a bank branch in the school in which students work and conduct authentic banking transactions. Also, teachers led the creation of the Peer Mentoring Program in which students help other high school and middle school students who are at-risk academically. Also, a group of teachers approached administration and formed a freshman class PLC that meets both after school hours and during PLC time to meet the unique needs of freshmen. Teachers serve on curriculum committees, have created or are creating common summative assessments for courses, and revise instructional practices through integrating technology and applying 21st century skills into their teaching and learning. Much of this work is done outside of class time on teachers' own time. Although teachers are provided with one PLC per month to do this work, this time is insufficient to work on these initiatives. Yet, the teachers continue to do this work to improve teaching and learning for the students. It is evident from observing classrooms that teachers maximize 21st century skills in practice within their classrooms and that students have great respect for their teachers and the quality of work they are doing. Teachers report that, although they are working a great deal outside the school day, most do it because they care greatly for their students. Teachers also use PLC time and their own time to review data, conduct research on best practices, and undergo professional development activities to improve student learning. Teachers also fill the role of department heads in the school. Teachers were formally acknowledged for their efforts by the administrative creation of several teaching awards. Due to the empowerment of the teachers, they are more apt to offer solutions to their concerns and act on them. In this same way, students increase their involvement in the school and their sense of belonging; consequently, they are more prepared to engage in learning, to meet the core values and beliefs of the school and to improve academic performance. (principal interview, teacher meetings, student meetings, classroom observations, student shadowing, parents)

The school board, superintendent, and principal are often collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. In 2010-2011 a new superintendent and principal joined the district. Their work is collaborative and reflective, according to both principal and superintendent interviews. On the Endicott survey conducted in March 2011, 68.3 percent of the staff agrees that the school board, superintendent, and principal collaborate in the process of achieving learning expectations. However, since that time, the leadership team has set improving 21st century skills as a priority for the high school. The leadership team conducts bi-monthly administrative meetings, agrees on goals, and follows-up on those goals in subsequent meetings. The principal attends bi-monthly board meetings and updates the board on high school events and progress. Conduct between board members and administration is respectful, and they use a round-table technique to discuss topics of concern. The superintendent is accessible to high school administration and staff both by demeanor and physical location since the superintendent's office in located in the same building as the high school, and she can be seen circulating among the school community during the day. Students know who she is and she often knows students. The Board of Education is generally described as being supportive of educational needs. The collaboration, reflection, and constructive behavior between the school board, central administration and the principal results in shared priorities for the district to improve students' learning. (self-study, board of education meeting, central office staff, Endicott survey)

The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. According to the Endicott survey, 80 percent of the staff and 65.4 percent of the parents agree with the aforementioned statement, and it was repeated by the administration throughout the visit. The principal regularly reports progress to the Board of Education in bi-monthly meetings. The self-study indicates that the current job description for the principal is outdated. However, his responsibilities with regard to teaching and learning include supervising the school's educational program; directing the implementation, revision, and evaluation of the curriculum; budgeting school time to provide for the efficient conduct of school instruction and business; maintaining high standards of student conduct; planning and conducting the in-service orientation and training of teachers; planning and implementing a program of professional growth for certified staff; acting as liaison between the school and community; interpreting activities and policies of the school and encouraging community participation in school life; monitoring the implementation of the Professional Development Plan, and conducting meetings with the staff as necessary for the proper functioning of the school. He supervises housemasters, department chairs, teaching staff, paraprofessionals, non-teaching staff, and other resource personnel. The principal's job description does not specifically refer to the responsibility to uphold the school's core values and beliefs. The principal submits a budget to the Board of Education. If a cut to the budget is requested, the principal sometimes is asked to make suggestions about the nature of the cuts. Since new leadership was put in place, the principal now has authority to make the budget changes. Budget cuts have affected staffing levels as some staff (particularly in the areas of art, technology education, and English) have not been replaced. Furthermore, the principal has established the infusion of 21st century skills as a major focus, and he has been given authority to make important policy decisions to support this initiative. The principal supports teaching and learning needs and provides focus on the learning expectations so that some, but not all, students can achieve them. The core values and beliefs provide critical thinking and problem-solving challenges to students, as well as opportunities for creativity, innovation, and adaptability, and an opportunity to hone effective communication skills. Most high-level classes (UCONN, Advanced Placement, honors, and college prep) infuse these demands and skills into the curriculum. However, through student and staff interviews, observations, and a review of curriculum, students in the general-level classes are not held to the same standards. Several students report that little work is done in these classes and responsibilities inconsistent with what they perceive college and honors class to be for independent homework, projects, or critical thinking activities that would provide them the opportunity to meet the school's core values and beliefs alongside their grade level peers. Providing the principal the autonomy to establish and carry out necessary planning, training, and revision of curriculum to meet the

school's core values and beliefs is essential to bring about school change and to improve teaching and learning at the school. Furthermore, supporting teaching and learning needs and providing focus so that all students can achieve them will result in better student performance. (classroom observations, student shadowing, student work, teacher interviews, self-study, school support staff, Endicott survey)

Commendations:

1. The ubiquitous belief that the Northwestern school culture is one in which students and teachers enjoy spending time
2. The School Climate Committee is a specific avenue for both teachers and students to express concerns
3. The recent implementation of a civics course requirement that provides all students with a heterogeneous grouping experience
4. The development and ongoing implementation of the student advisory program
5. The revision of the advisory curriculum in order to provide students with grade-specific assistance
6. The rotating schedule provides extended time each week for every class period
7. Student load and classes sizes meet the learning needs of students
8. The principal's instructional leadership which is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
9. The open and supportive administration
10. The creation of the Parent Advocacy Committee
11. The wide array of clubs, teams, organizations, and student supports available
12. The strong relationship between and among the Board of Education, superintendent, and principal

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement a method by which school-wide civic and social rubrics are used to evaluate students' ability to demonstrate respect for their school, peers, and teachers
2. Ensure that every student has the opportunity to enroll in heterogeneously grouped core courses over the course of his or her high school experience and provide teachers with professional development and strategies for teaching these courses
3. Develop and implement a plan to provide additional time and resources for professional development in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment knowledge and implementation
4. Develop long-term goals for the PLC model
5. Reflect on the current daily schedule to assess whether or not it best suits the needs of students and teachers and revise it as needed
6. Develop plans to prioritize initiatives to provide for the proper training and practice prior to implementation

|6| School Resources for Learning

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

Conclusions

Northwestern Regional High School (NHRS) faculty utilizes strategies for students, including identified and at-risk students that support student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Members of the school's Scientific-Based Intervention Response to Intervention (SRBI/RTI) team meet once every seven days. Identified at-risk students are assigned to academic support at the Tier II or Tier III level or to behavioral intervention at an appropriate tier level (as defined in SRBI). High-risk students in distress are subject to protocols identified in the Crisis Team Manual. The RTI team is comprised of the school social worker, two school psychologists, two counselors, the special education chair, administrators, and the RTI coordinator.

There is also ongoing collaboration among teachers, guidance counselors and direct service providers. Referrals to the RTI team are documented using the RTI referral form. The RTI coordinator provides ongoing feedback weekly. Data forms are collected for analysis and the results are shared with respective counselors prior to the SRBI meeting. While the 9th grade teachers report meeting on a monthly basis to discuss transition issues and direct intervention strategies, it is unclear whether or not other grades meet in the same capacity. Tier I intervention strategies have been developed to meet the needs of special education and 504 students, and the process for regular education students is under development. (self-study, evidence box, teacher interviews, panel discussion)

NHRS provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. The school website provides information about student support services. The special education webpage provides information about SRBI and LD eligibility as well as information on community support services. The guidance department website provides information on academic support services. In addition, the guidance department shares information about support services at Open House and 9th grade meetings. The school newsletter and AlertNow weekly email blasts have provided information on topics such as bullying and substance abuse. Additionally, NHRS has hosted evening presentations from the McCall Foundation, the Drug Enforcement Association, Rachel's Challenge, and the Anti-Defamation League. On an as-needed basis, school counselors refer the student(s) to the school psychologist or social worker who in turn refer the student(s) to community-based services such as Susan B. Anthony, 211 Infoline, Mobile Crisis Unit, Northwest Center, Center for Youth and Families, Intensive In-Home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services (ICAPS), Charlotte Hungerford Partial Hospital Program, Youth Services Bureau, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, and the Juvenile Review Board. Because families are provided information about support services students have an increased opportunity to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (evidence box, school website, teacher interviews)

NRHS student support services and staff use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. The guidance department uses PowerSchool which is the student information system (SIS), to develop student schedules and to track student attendance and performance. They also use the Naviance program to provide assistance for students in planning post-secondary careers. Through Naviance, counselors use interest surveys and inventories to help students make decisions about colleges and careers. The special education department uses IEP Direct to write, record, and print Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for special education students. A shortened Individualized Education Plan with accommodations and goals is emailed to the regular education teachers. Special education teachers have access to web-based programs such as Read Naturally, Writers' Companion, Lexia, and web-based DOLCH activities, to address decoding, comprehension and fluency concerns. Students have access to iPads to facilitate written expression. The library/media center uses Follett Destiny, an online card catalog, to share information about library resources. Follett interfaces with PowerSchool

so that weekly updates add new students to Destiny. Information regarding students with health issues is disseminated to faculty and staff via PowerSchool and Google Shared Docs in compliance with HIPAA (Health Portability and Accountability Act). (self-study, teacher/dept. interviews, evidence box)

NRHS has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide counseling services to all students at each grade level. The NRHS counseling department is comprised of a director of guidance, three school counselors, two school psychologists, one school social worker and one registrar. Counselors meet with students individually as well as in small groups to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. One counselor who is assigned to grade nine meets with students in their English classes. She addresses topics such as how to succeed in high school, how to use a school planner, how to determine a learning style, and how to study for exams. The Naviance program is introduced at the freshman grade level. A limited developmental guidance scope and sequence is in place. Standards and competencies are established in career, personal/social, and academic domains. Beginning in grade 8, counselors develop a personal educational plan with each student based upon individual abilities, needs, achievements, and interests; this plan is further developed in the high school. Guidance counselors engage in academic counseling, personal counseling, and post-secondary and career planning. They also monitor student academic progress, consult with staff and parents, and engage in crisis intervention, records-keeping, and in-school and home-school communications. Parents are encouraged to contact the appropriate counselor concerning their child's daily school adjustments, social or emotional issues, schedule, or career or college planning. Counselors work together with students and/or parents to advocate for the student. Assignment of guidance counselors is based on grade level and the student's last name.

A single counselor is assigned to serve all freshman students. This provides a smooth transition to the high school and continuity in support services. In grades 10-12, assignments are made alphabetically by student's last name. Students remain with the same guidance counselor throughout their three remaining high school years. Although the guidance personnel report meeting regularly with students in grades 9-12 to address personal, academic, career, and college topics, only 17.6 percent of surveyed students indicates they meet regularly with their counselor. Counselors and department chairs meet with parents at an 8th grade parents' orientation night held annually in January. At this meeting, parents learn about each department in the high school and what is offered academically for each grade level. In mid-winter, counselors meet all 8th grade students through middle school teams and discuss 9th grade course offerings. The ninth grade counselor meets with 8th grade students again at the end of the 8th grade year to touch base with them and address any questions or concerns. An ice cream social for all incoming 8th graders is held the night before school starts. This event allows the students to find lockers and orient themselves to the high school building layout. The 8th grade counselors meet individually with all 8th grade students throughout the school year. This is done through the English classes, with counselors dividing themselves among the classes. The counselor addresses topics that include, but are not limited to how to succeed in high school, how to use the school agenda, how learning styles affect student learning, and how to study for exams. Counselors meet with 10th grade students informally on an "as needed" basis.

Counselors meet with 11th grade students in individual meetings in January and in their U.S. history classes to discuss the college search and application process as well as what to expect after high school. The notifications regarding PSATs and SATs are sent to grade 11 students at home. In grade 12, counselors meet with students through their English classes. Topics covered include accessing and interpreting Naviance, Career Cruising, and interviewing techniques. Individual planning meetings are held by appointment in October and November to help students meet the fall deadlines. In addition to the scheduled grade-level programs, guidance counselors are available to meet with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling on an as needed basis. In addition to this, guidance counselors meet with each student from their caseload on an individual basis at least one time per year. During regularly scheduled meetings for all students, there is a discussion about future

plans and students complete a brief questionnaire; this information is used to determine and select courses for the following year. NRHS provides special programs that are brought into the school and are available to members of the student body. There is a variety of topics during the year that cover health issues, abuse issues, and various social issues. In the event of the need for counseling services beyond what is available in the school setting, NRHS works collaboratively with several community and mental health agencies and social service providers. A list of these providers is available to parents upon request or if a referral is necessary. The list can also be found on the school website as well as in the Parent Handbook. NRHS uses an informal process to evaluate its services and assessments. Guidance staff meets during the year on a regular basis to evaluate its services and programs. For example, based on feedback from parents, the college finance informational meeting has been changed from the senior year to the junior year. Guidance makes limited use of a 21st century tool called Naviance, a computer program that allows counselors to access information their student's college choices and make educational plans with them. In addition, they also use a program called Career Cruising which allows students to research career choices. The guidance suite contains catalogs of colleges and has computers that students can use to access Naviance and Career Cruising. A notebook with detailed information on each college that has visited NRHS is available in the guidance suite. There are approximately 50 scheduled college visitations per year. When a developmental guidance program is fully implemented and a formal method is used to evaluate support services, equity and consistency of service can be assured. (teacher interviews, department interviews, parent and student interviews, website, Endicott survey)

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 to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. There are two full-time registered nurses in the Region 7 health office. The two nurses share responsibilities between the middle and high schools. One nurse is also a certified emergency medical technician (EMT). The nurses attend conferences pertaining to school health a minimum of twice a year and maintain Continuing Educational Units (CEUs). All teacher-coaches are certified in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and some are Automatic External Defibrillator trained. A licensed athletic trainer is made available for student-athletes at all athletic events held on campus. Many of the intervention services in the health office are also preventative services. There are individualized health care plans (IHCP) for students with chronic health issues to prevent exacerbation of the health problem. For example, care plans are provided for students with asthma and diabetes. Additionally, accommodations are made for students with long and short-term physical disabilities and/or mobility limitations to ensure their safe and full access to building facilities. Instructive and anticipatory guidance in maintaining wellness and disease prevention are given daily to students who come into the health office. However, formal informative sessions are not carried out through the health office but are done by the health department. These informal discussions are dependent on the presenting problem or health complaint that the student brings to the health office. Examples of frequent topics addressed by the nurse include, but are not limited to, nutrition, hydration, hygiene, safety, stress, the transmission of disease, and wellness.

The health office offers annual influenza vaccine clinics, hypertension monitoring, and individualized health consultations to all staff. The health office ensures that all grade 9 students complete state mandated vision and scoliosis screenings. A health assessment and physical exam are required of all grade 10 students. This, too, is state mandated. Information regarding compliance to state mandates are included in the student agenda, in the Parent Handbook, on the school website, and in newsletters. In addition, letters and reminders are mailed to families throughout the year to help students achieve student compliance. Lastly, the nurse engages in direct interventions including hands-on first aid, nursing interventions, health guidance directives and contact and communications with parents. Most referrals to the nurse are done on an informal basis, via phone call or through

personal communication. The nurse initiates a confidential referral form that will become part of the student's health record. Referrals from the nurse to other support services or community agencies are made on an informal basis through a phone call. Depending upon the nature of the concern or confidentiality involving HIPAA regulations, referrals may involve parental communications. Parents are required to complete and return health room emergency cards (HREC). These are sent home at the beginning of each school year. The HREC cards provide the nurse with student information including updated emergency contact information, medical provider, both existing and new medical conditions, recent illnesses or injuries and recent physician visits. The nurse determines with whom this information is to be shared and the means by which it will be disseminated (PowerSchool, email or individual conferences with teachers).

This information will also be used to refer families to the State of Connecticut HUSKY health insurance plan. The school nurse works closely with athletic director and athletic trainer to comply with State of Connecticut and Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) guidelines concerning review, processing, and recording of student health records. Mandated reports, via Accident/Incident Report forms, are sequenced from the coach, through the athletic director and/or trainer to the nurse concerning serious injuries (such as concussions) that require academic accommodations. The nurse works in conjunction with the trainer to facilitate IMPACT concussion assessment program. The nurse, accordingly, sends notification to faculty regarding classroom accommodations. Communication between athletic offices and the nurse are conducted via Google Shared Docs. A number of strategically placed AEDs are available to be used in the event of a cardiac emergency. These are regularly checked/maintained and several staff members are trained to use them. Furthermore, NRHS has an emergency preparedness plan and evacuation/emergency exit routes are posted in classrooms, offices and throughout the school. The nurse may be the first staff member to assess physical, emotional, and psychological issues. For many students she is the gatekeeper to support services. The nurse works collaboratively with other support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, speech and language therapists and special education staff to assist students in meeting their educational goals. The school nurse gathers data on vision and scoliosis screenings for students. She gathers data for each student that includes the date and result of screening, as well as follow-up information. Additional data is gathered from students in grades 9-12 that includes dates of mandated physicals, current physicals, immunizations, and other health concerns. There is also a separate spreadsheet that includes sports eligibility lists and health information for coaches that is shared with the athletic director and that is updated as athletic physicals and health information are submitted. A spreadsheet organized by grade has been created and it lists all students who have health concerns. Due to the efficiency and advanced training of the nursing staff, students and families are assured of reliable preventative and responsive health care. (teacher interviews, self-study, website, evidence box)

NHRS's library/media services are integrated into the curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum and who provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum. The school ensures the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school. While the personnel and staff are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning, there is no formal assessment process in place to improve services and to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The library/media specialist is engaged in the implementation of some of the curricula and, while there is no formal alignment, keeps those curricula in mind for purchasing and programs. Teachers can and do request print and non-print materials to support their curriculum and these materials are purchased as the budget allows. Although teachers access the library media center to support their curriculum, 14.6 percent of surveyed students indicates they use the library often during their classes. The library/media specialist uses the school's core values and beliefs, which are aligned with the curriculum, as a guide for purchasing decisions. Materials purchased include multicultural materials, citizenship

materials, and materials to support varied abilities. While the library/media specialist teaches information literacy and 21st century literacy skills, she is not involved in team or department meetings on a scheduled basis, but, as an assistant department head, does attend department head meetings when possible. The library/media specialist collaborates formally and informally with teachers and classes to make certain that students are aware of resources that support the curriculum. Teachers bring classes to the library media center to use print resources. The library media center staff will organize content-specific materials for classes that can be utilized by students before, during, or after the school day. Online materials are available at all times from school or home. The print collection in the library media center supports all areas of the curriculum. Technology, such as E-readers, and other electronic resources are broadly available. Audio-visual materials are frequently used and the audiobook collection is expanding. NHRS does not have a diverse school population but in an effort to heighten multicultural awareness, the library media specialist purchases print materials and periodicals to expose students to other races and cultures. In addition, print materials at various reading levels are purchased to meet the learning needs of all students. The library media center is staffed by one certified library/media specialist, one licensed technical assistant, and one media technician. The library/media specialist teaches information literacy skills through classroom assignments. The library/media specialist builds and administers the budget, monitors development of the print and non-print collection, and advises the library staff. The licensed technical assistant catalogues materials as they come into the library. The media technician maintains library media center equipment, the media distribution system, and the AV systems in the auditorium and theatre. The library media center is adequately staffed to allow access to the library/media center both before and after the school day. The library media center is open 30 minutes before school and attendance during that time averages between 55 and 65 students. The library media center is open three days a week until 3:15pm and two days a week until 4:00pm. The after school hours were added per parents' requests. The library media center hours are posted on the door and online, listed in the middle and high school handbooks, and published in the library media center pamphlet. The library media center has adequate space to simultaneously accommodate a class at tables, in the classroom, and at the 24 computers while still allowing access to students from study halls or commons. The library media center provides a reading area with cushioned seating and game tables for student recreational use. Students from commons or study hall come to the library media center to work quietly, study, use computers, play various games, fold origami, or pleasure read in the reading area. The library/media specialist entertains student requests for materials, which are honored most of the time. One of the library staff is at the circulation desk to provide help for students who need assistance. While there is no formal processes in place to evaluate library/media programs and services, the library/media specialist and library media center staff indicates they have used feedback from staff members to create a picture book collection, a Hi/Low book collection, and an audio book collection, however, this does not address a programatic method of evaluation. Materials have been purchased for teachers participating in the TEAM process. Faculty has requested and the library has purchased subscriptions to Turnitin, Noodletools, and Discovery Education. These tools, in addition to an expanding eBook collection, are designed to support students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. When the library implements a formal process of evaluating its services, equity and implementation of 21st century standards will be assured. (self-study, teacher and department interviews, Endicott survey)

NRHS support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and English Language Learners (ELL) 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. They also provide inclusive learning opportunities for students and perform ongoing assessments using relevant data including feedback from the school community to improve services and ensure students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. The special education department is comprised of eight certified full-time special education teachers and 14 full-time educational assistants. The average special education student-adult caseload is 14:1. In

addition, the staff is supported by two full-time psychologists, one social worker, and two speech/language pathologists who assist in the recommendation and implementation of modifications and accommodations for identified students. Occupational and physical therapy consultative and direct services are available as needed. NRHS's support staff collaborates with teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to achieve 21st century learning expectations. The collaboration occurs in a variety of ways. For example, a 9th grade team comprised of teachers, administrators, the psychologist, social worker, and special education department chair meets monthly to identify and address concerns about students in need of behavioral, emotional, or academic intervention or assistance. NHRS provides co-taught classes with modified assessment and instruction for special education students in regular education classes. The special education department provides technology support, through the use of iPads and Dragon Naturally Speaking software, for students who struggle with written expression. SMARTBoards, iPads, and tape recorders assist ELL students in translation and note-taking. NRHS has an ELL staff member who works with regular education teachers to modify lessons and to assist students with translations. The RTI coordinator works with regular and special education teachers to refer students who are experiencing academic difficulties. The RTI referral form is in the student handbook and is made available to teachers. The RTI team which is comprised of guidance counselors, psychologists, the social worker, and administrators meets weekly to review data on student progress and to discuss new referrals. New teachers are provided with training from the special education department chair about how to access and utilize the various support services. Special education teachers meet with regular education teachers to discuss how to interpret and meet IEP goals and how to assist students in meeting daily behavioral and academic success. NRHS provides a continuum of services for identified students, which includes self-contained classes for those who need behavioral interventions, classes for those who need specialized or remedial instruction, and team taught classes for those who need behavioral and/or academic support in the regular education classroom. An after-school alternative program called STEP (Students in Transition Program) is in place for those who struggle with the demands of the regular school day by providing vocational and educational experiences on a flexible schedule in accordance with the needs of the student. Students may work or intern in the community, and take alternative classes designed to meet their needs when they are not at their vocational training. While NRHS provides a variety of inclusive learning opportunities at an inclusion rate of 55 percent, the state guidelines indicate the inclusion rate should be 70 percent.

Opportunities include co-taught classes, the STEP program, the Achieving Independence Mechanism (AIM) program, the LINKS program and the Intensive Learning Program (ILP). Co-taught classes provide identified students with the opportunity to be included in the regular education curriculum. The STEP program provides students who struggle with the rigors of the academic day the opportunity to earn credits and a diploma outside of the school day. The STEP staff comprised of six academic instructors, a paraprofessional, a guidance counselor, a social worker, and a psychologist meets with 20 to 40 students from 3:00pm-5:30pm four to five days a week. The AIM program provides vocational and academic services for approximately 20 students. The staff includes a certified instructor, a vocational coordinator, and three paraprofessionals. The LINKS program offers inclusive opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities and multiple handicaps. LINKS students attend regular education classes with a paraprofessional who collaborates with teachers to modify and assist with assignments. LINKS graduates are provided the opportunity to pursue further education and vocational training at Highlander Transitional Academy (HTA). The HTA is a multi-site transition program at the UCONN/Torrington Campus, Northwestern Community College Campus, and Highlander Transition Life Skills Center for 18 to 21 year old students who have met high school requirements but need one to three years of additional support in academics, vocational training, and community awareness. Designed to identify and incorporate students' needs through individual ability programming, the HTA also accepts tuition students from nearby districts. The ILP program focuses on improving literacy skills for students with identified learning disabilities. Many of these students are tuition students from neighboring towns. A ninth and tenth grade writing class is designed to improve fluency in

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reading and writing. The program coordinator works with regular education teachers to support these students in content area reading and writing assignments. The special education department performs assessments using limited data from curriculum-based and norm-referenced assessments. Special education teachers provide support to regular education teachers through explanation of and monitoring through the IEP. Quarterly and annual reviews of the IEP assess student needs and provide appropriate placement. The student, parent(s), guardian(s), regular education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, school psychologist, and social worker are involved in the annual review. Service modifications are made from feedback made by the school community and data collected. School support staff provides individual and group counseling for students who are dealing with issues such as family alcoholism, abuse, or eating disorders. Guidance counselors, psychologists, and the social worker are available upon student request or teacher referral. Students may be seen immediately or by appointment, depending on the urgency of the situation. In addition, the school psychologist and social worker lead weekly group meetings for special education students. Separate meetings for boys and girls provide a safe environment to discuss topics of concern. When students are included in the regular classroom at the recommended rate, equity and access will be assured. (self-study, teacher interviews, parent groups, department meetings)

Commendations:

1. The ample opportunities provided for student success through academic support services
2. The use of the school website to communicate student support services
3. The health services personnel who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
4. The sufficient print and non-print materials and technologies available to support students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
5. The pleasant and welcoming environment for students to read, research, and work in the library media center
6. The personal education plan developed for each student
7. The recent provision of the Naviance program
8. The staffing levels in all areas of student support services
9. The after-school alternative program (STEP)
10. The range of special education and 504 programs and services
11. The weekly newsletters
12. The collaboration with community/local support services

Recommendations:

1. Provide professional development/clarification to assist staff in better understanding how to implement SRBI I and RTI interventions and strategies
2. Establish a means to systemically evaluate the effectiveness of support services (guidance, health, library/media, and special education) in helping students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
3. Create and implement a comprehensive developmental guidance curriculum only if that's what they want to do
4. Establish a process for counselors to meet regularly with the sophomore class

7 Community Resources for Learning

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

1. The community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for:
   - a wide range of school programs and services
   - sufficient professional and support staff
   - ongoing professional development and curriculum revision
   - a full range of technology support
   - sufficient equipment
   - sufficient instructional materials and supplies

2. The school develops, plans, and funds programs:
   - to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant
   - to properly maintain, catalogue, and replace equipment
   - to keep the school clean on a daily basis

3. The community funds and the school implements a long-range plan that addresses:
   - programs and services
   - enrollment changes and staffing needs
   - facility needs
   - technology
   - capital improvements
   -

4. Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget.

5. The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services.

6. The school maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.

7. All professional staff actively engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and reach out specifically to those families who have been less connected with the school.

8. The school develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning.

Conclusions

The community and district's governing body provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient support staff, a full range of technology support and sufficient equipment; however, teachers report budgetary limitations in the areas of professional staff, professional development and curriculum revision, and their impact on the acquisition of sufficient instructional materials and supplies. Students are afforded a diverse and comprehensive program of study throughout their high school career as evidenced in the program of studies and data collected in the Endicott survey; 77 percent of students feels the school has a wide range of programs and services. Special education students receive assistance from special education teachers and support staff, SRBI services, the math lab, and the peer mentoring program. The agriculture program provides an alternative career focused educational opportunity for district and out-of- district students. The STEP is an additional program designed to meet the needs of specific student populations unable to manage in a traditional learning setting.

Northwestern offers an extensive range of clubs, activities and sports teams. Noteworthy is the uniqueness of offerings, which is a direct reflection of student interest, such as the Robotics team, peer mentoring program, and Chinese club. Grant money led to the establishment of a new technology coach position for the 2012-13 school year. Additionally, technology hardware and software installations have increased throughout the building providing the majority of classrooms with interactive white boards. A new server is due to be installed in the near future. A technology plan is in place to eliminate teacher desktop computers and replace them with laptop computers. Over the past five years position cuts have negatively impacted course offerings, class size and teacher assignments, requiring some staff to travel between the middle and high schools. Teaching positions in English, art, technology, and business education have been eliminated. While administration supports the need for professional development time, some teachers report the denial of off-site experiences due to budget. Some teachers reported that curriculum money is nonexistent for summer writing projects; however, $15,000 was allocated to this purpose in the 2011-2012 budget. Instructional material and supplies orders must adhere to a zero percent budget increase, which translates into a decrease in funds due to the increase in prices. The decrease in the culinary budget, for example, has required the teacher to introduce more demonstrations and fewer hands-on cooking experiences. Of considerable importance to the entire teaching staff and reflected in parent comments is the recent elimination of after-school bus service. This decision significantly impacted attendance in after-school programs. While the community and district's governing body provide dependable funding for school programs, the majority of school services, support staff and technology needs, the lack of funding in the areas of professional staff, professional development, curricular revision, instructional materials and supplies, and bus transportation significantly impact the students' overall educational experience. (teacher interviews, central office personnel, parents, self-study, students, teachers, department leaders)

By design, the school develops plans and funds programs to ensure the proper maintenance and timely repair of the building and school plant, continued maintenance, cataloging and replacement of equipment, and maintenance of a high standard of daily upkeep of the entire school facility. According to the Endicott survey, 60 percent of students, 77 percent of staff, and 87 percent of parents feel the school is clean and well-maintained. Northwestern Regional High School staff includes one head custodian, five custodians, and two maintenance workers, all under the supervision of the business manager. Annual funds are allocated for preventive maintenance, buildings and grounds, and 24hr/5 day per week, including an 8:00am-5:00pm Saturday shift, manned coverage of the facilities. Routine maintenance requests, both formal and informal, are responded to in a timely manner. Maintenance workers respond to specific work-orders in HVAC and grounds as needed. Multiple upgrades have taken place in an effort to minimize rising energy costs. New boilers were installed in 1999 with an upgrade of their burners in

2012. By March 2013 the school will be equipped with a combination oil/natural gas heating system. Noteworthy is the district's alternative energy initiatives, which include a power purchase agreement utilizing solar panels installed on the roof. Efforts are being made to install a wind turbine on the grounds to further reduce energy costs. Custodial staff is responsible for a tri-annual thorough cleaning of the school building, with a primary focus on the floors. This thorough cleaning occurs during the December, spring, and summer breaks. In accordance with state mandate, green products are used. The district adequately develops, plans, and funds programs to maintain, repair and replace equipment, and sufficiently sustain the daily upkeep of the school campus. (Endicott survey, facility tour, teacher interviews, observation)

NWRS is able to confidently establish and implement a long-range plan to address programs and services, enrollment and staffing needs, facility needs, and technology and capital improvements given the annual budget support by the communities. Under the direction of the new superintendent a number of initiatives are in the beginning stages of implementation. Currently a three-year plan is in place to increase staff to help all students meet the state graduation requirement of 25 credits. The superintendent's office has developed a budget initiative to offer release time for teachers to vertically align curriculum to adhere to Common Core State Standards. The conversion of the school's boilers to a natural gas/oil combination heating/cooling system is on schedule to be completed in March 2013. Continued discussions to install a wind turbine are ongoing. A solar power purchase agreement is in place to reduce energy costs. A technology committee comprised of the superintendent, principal and technology personnel is in the beginning stages of developing an implementation plan to address technology needs, establish a viable web page to go online later this month, update wireless access to accommodate the Bring Your Own Device initiative, and upgrade the server. The committee is streamlining an online request process to address technology issues and requests. They are also responsible for training and overseeing PowerSchool and the student management system, Haiku. A capital improvement plan is definitively outlined in a 3 to 5 year priority list. Upcoming capital improvements include obtaining athletic storage buildings, replacing a section of the roof, and continuing to equip classrooms with interactive white boards. Eighty percent of the staff agrees that a long-term plan exists to address future needs, and documentation from and conversations with building administration confirmed that assertion. The continuous efforts to update and revise the long-term facilities plan has resulted in overall agreement in its efficacy. (school leadership, central office personnel, Endicott survey, facility tour, teacher interview)

Faculty and building administrators work collectively in the development and implementation of the annual school budget. Department chairs solicit department members for curricular and equipment needs as a beginning step in the budgetary process. This information is collated and entered into BudgetSense, a financial software program. In addition to this method, the Agriculture Education program budget is reviewed by an agricultural advisory board comprised of community members directly involved in the agriculture school program before it is submitted to the business office. This board, which meets once a month, prioritizes needs for additional supplies, equipment, technology, new programs, and staff. Additionally, the principal and chairs of special education/shared services, technology, and buildings and grounds, receive budget requests from their staff which are then inputted into the software program. Budgetary data from BudgetSense is then reviewed by the superintendent, business manager, and building principals. Specific budget allocations are determined in conjunction with the district's capital improvement plan and a prioritized list of needs. The superintendent shares an initial draft of the budget with each town's government officials and the Board of Education. Following an open forum within each town, a final draft of the budget is proposed at a district Board of Education meeting for approval. The approved budget is then presented to each community for a referendum vote. Upon approval of the school budget, all stakeholders are given access to their respective budgets at the beginning of the new fiscal

year. The collaborative and streamlined nature of the budgetary process in Region 7 allows for all stakeholders to be actively involved in the development and implementation of the district's annual budget. (teacher interviews, self-study, school board)

The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. The 1999-2000 renovations saw an increased footprint of the school building which included the building of the agriculture facility, auxiliary gym and outdoor track. The agriculture facility includes a barn, green house, aqualab, maintenance garage and food service classroom. The majority of teachers have their own classroom equipped with SMARTBoard/EPSON technology. However, there are teachers who are required to share a classroom due to limited availability of classrooms. Classroom and computer lab technology is abundant with 500 desktop and 180 laptops available to teachers and students. Classroom and common areas are regularly maintained and all repair requests are completed in a timely fashion. Use of automatic light sensors throughout the building and use of alternative energy sources along with the updating of the boiler/burner system (currently being reconfigured to a natural gas/oil combination system) has ensured reduced energy costs which subsequently reduce budget costs. Teachers report concerns that storage space varies throughout the building. The school also lacks conference areas for meetings such as PPT/504, confidential parent meetings, and small group gatherings. While improvements have been made to outdoor athletic fields and an additional gymnasium space has been created, athletic fields were lost to the renovation, and physical education teachers continue to use an aerobic room as a classroom to accommodate health classes for juniors. The media center provides ample resources and space for students to access research tools within a quiet environment conducive to productive independent study. Seventy-one percent of students, 80 percent of faculty and 85 percent of parents feel the school physical plant contributes to quality school programs and services. Although shared classrooms and limited storage and conferencing space are noted, the school facility supports the delivery of high quality school programs and services. (teacher interviews, Endicott survey, self-study, facility tour)

Documenting that the physical plant and school facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and maintain compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations is the direct responsibility of the district's business manager. Fire drills are scheduled and performed monthly. The fire system is inspected twice a year. Fire extinguishers are inspected monthly and the fire pump is started and tested as well. Heating and cooling filters are changed twice per year, and more often if necessary. Annual maintenance checks are conducted on heating and cooling systems. The local building inspector makes a yearly inspection of the school building. As mandated by state law, a boiler inspection is conducted every two years. Radon and asbestos inspections are performed per the requirements of state regulations. All documentation is housed in the business manager's office. A safety committee comprised of teachers, administrators, and the head custodian meets four times a year to review health and safety concerns within the building and grounds. The extensive efforts to insure the safety, health and well-being of students, staff and visitors to Northwestern High School are demonstrated in the school's adherence to the federal, state, and local laws and regulations governing fire, health and safety. (facility tour, central office personnel, teacher interview)

Consistent and continual efforts are made by professional staff to actively engage parents and families in their students' educational experience; however, parent attendance at school events beyond athletics indicates a population of parents exists who are not as connected to the school as others. Data provided in the Endicott survey indicates 49 percent of parents feels that the professional staff does not actively engage parents as active partners in their child's education. Contrary to this, 77 percent of staff believes the professional staff engages parents as partners in the child's education. Examples of family events provided by Region 7 staff include Open House, Freshman Ice Cream Social, and guidance department events such as Senior and Junior Parent Financial Aid Nights. Parents are invited to attend a course selection session with their student and school counselor each

year. Efforts by community organizations and the principal to provide parenting workshops have been met with low turnout, yet evaluated as successful by participants. In school year 2011-12, the principal initiated a Parent Advisory Council to inform parents, and to discuss upcoming initiatives and concerns with parents. The Highlander Fair provides an additional connection to school programs and clubs, and provides opportunities for both parent and student involvement. The agricultural program is highly visible through its entrepreneurial focus. For example, it produces and sells maple syrup, plants, and crafts, and has a well established communication system with agricultural parents. Further school communication from Region 7 includes an annual updated Student Handbook, periodic newsletters from the principal and guidance department, professional staff emails and phone contacts, and a school calendar of events on the Region 7 website. However, there is not a centralized process for updating community and school events on the website; therefore information is not disseminated in a timely manner. The local public access channel is utilized as another method to communicate school events to the community. Haiku, a learning management system designed to increase parental and student involvement in student academic progress and awareness of school events was installed at the beginning of this school year. PowerSchool, a web-based student information system, and Naviance, a web based college/career search engine, are available to parents and students. While PowerSchool notifies parents of grade changes as they occur, Naviance is underutilized as evidenced by the low number of requests for parent access and limited use as a means for the guidance staff's communication of college/career information with students and families. In the event of an emergency or news worthy of immediate attention, Region 7 utilizes ALERT NOW to contact all families. While the school communicates through a multitude of facets, efforts need to be ongoing and continual improvements made to reach out to otherwise disengaged parents and families. (parents, Endicott survey, self-study, support staff)

Students' educational experience is enhanced by the school's purposeful development of productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships. A distinct variety of partnership opportunities exists for all students. College courses are made available to students through the UConn Early College Experience (ECE) and Northwestern Connecticut Community College's career pathway articulation with NRHS. Students receive college credit for both experiences upon successful completion of the specific course(s). Credit earned at NCCC may be applied to the student's high school graduation credit requirement. Students with an interest in finance and banking are afforded the opportunity sponsored by Northwest Community Bank to engage in a hands-on, authentic banking experience as a teller at the bank's satellite on the high school campus. Students enrolled in this program have secured employment at Northwest Community Bank upon graduation. The companies of ALCOA and J. C. Penney provided funds for the establishment of Northwestern's Robotics club, which is co-advised by a Region 7 parent and teacher. In 2011-2012 the club ranked first in the rookie division at the regional competition. Students enrolled in the agriculture program are required to participate in a work experience program. Generally these students seek employment with local agriculture businesses. An example of this structured, work-based learning was a student who worked in the field of masonry at a local stone company. Within the AIM and LINKS curriculums, a work study/job training experience is formulated for each student based on his/her individual interests, abilities, and needs. Job opportunities range from community to school based locations, often augmenting programs within the high school. A clear example is the recent "employment" of special education students as food purchasers for the school's culinary program. The school counselors offer informal career opportunities, the Independent Work Experience, to interested and STEP students. Job shadow sites are solicited based on the expressed interests of these students. However, the lack of a formalized program limits the awareness for students and the number of available job sites. Access to authentic career experiences is diverse within both the school and community, and would benefit from the ongoing formalization of school to career opportunities. (parents, students, self-study, teacher interviews)

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Commendations:

1. The acquisition and installment of technology throughout the school building
2. The use of alternative energy sources to minimize energy costs
3. The timely manner in which maintenance requests are processed
4. The long-range plans exist to address program, service, staffing, facility, technology, and capital improvement needs
5. The staff and administration actively collaborate in developing the annual school budget
6. The agriculture program actively engages families in school and community-based events
7. The superintendent's development of a budget initiative that provides release time for teachers to align the curriculum with the common core

Recommendations:

1. Evaluate the impact on the elimination of after school bus service on student opportunities for learning and co-curricular participation
2. Provide adequate funding for professional development and curriculum development
3. Investigate options for increased storage
4. Explore options for additional conferencing areas
5. Centralize communication responsibilities of school website and calendar

FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

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

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

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

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Committee has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Committee within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change that negatively impacts on the school's adherence to the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact that the change has had on the school's ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation. The Committee's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 58. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report, which is required of each member school to ensure that the Committee office has current statistical data on the school.

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

The visiting committee would like to express our appreciation for the hospitality and professionalism of the Northwestern Regional High School learning community throughout our visit.

Northwestern Regional High School

NEASC Accreditation Visiting Committee

September 30, 2012 - October 3, 2012

Kimberly Gallo, Chair Region 12 Public Schools Washington, Depot, CT 06793	Michelle Fogarty, Science Wheeler Middle/High School North Stonington, CT 06359
Michael Landry, Assistant Chair Retired from Litchfield Public Schools Litchfield, CT 06013	Rebecca Folta, Guidance Woodland Regional High School Beacon Falls, CT 06403
Rebecca Anderson, Math Coginchaug Regional High School Durham, CT 06422	Megan Lafayette, Principal Norton High School Norton, MA 02766
Russ Arrigoni, Social Studies Valley Regional High School, Deep River, CT 06417	Regina Milano, Science West Haven High School West Haven, CT 06518
James Batt, Special Education Plainville High School Madison, CT 06062	Pamela Strout, Math Bethel High School Bethel, CT 06801
Shayna Boberek, English Lewis S. Mills High School Burlington, CT 06013	Jacob Thomas, English Newtown High School Sandy Hook, CT 06482
Lisa Cheney, English Seymour High School Seymour, CT 06483	Julie Tracy, Media Specialist Tolland High School Tolland, CT 06084
Jennifer Cushman, Agriculture Glastonbury High School Glastonbury, CT 06033	Lisa Wolak, Principal Weston High School Weston, CT 06883

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Commission on Public Secondary Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

Commendations:

1. The involvement of the learning community in an inclusive process to identify and create a set of core values and beliefs about learning
2. The creation of rubrics to measure the learning expectations for academic, civic, and social competencies identified in the school's core values and belief statement
3. The alignment of district and school learning expectations
4. The ubiquitous perception that Northwestern Regional High School is a school of high standards
5. The extent to which the Core Values and Beliefs are reflected in the culture of the school
6. The use of PLC's to collaborate about the implementation of the Core Values and Beliefs
7. The dedication teachers have demonstrated to students and to aligning curriculum horizontally in their voluntary meetings after school hours
8. The teachers' willingness to informally collaborate with each other in order to improve their instruction
9. The encouragement of the staff to attend regular professional development outside of the building
10. The teachers have begun to implement school-wide rubrics in their classrooms to assess student work
11. The posting of curriculum on a web platform enabling all teachers to see all curricula
12. The increased technology to support teaching and learning
13. The adoption of curriculum mapper
14. The creation of the advisory curriculum
15. The extensive variety of course and extracurricular opportunities
16. The dedication and willingness of teachers to embrace the technology being introduced in their instruction at all levels
17. The willingness of all staff members to maintain their expertise in their content area through professional development offered in-house and through outside workshops
18. The use of inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking in many courses
19. The many classes that promote knowledge and skills through the use of authentic tasks and group learning opportunities
20. The individual teachers who are adept at differentiating student expectations and extending timelines in accordance with student needs
21. The implementation of Scientific Research Based Intervention
22. The formalization of the process by which all teachers assess students in two school-wide rubrics
23. The ability to utilize Power School to monitor and track individual achievement of the learning expectations
24. The rubrics that are an integral component of the summative assessment process across the school
25. The exemplar work samples used as models for student assignments
26. The faculty that is dedicated and willing to create ad hoc and informal opportunities to collaborate
27. The review of summative assessment results before beginning a new unit of study
28. The examination of standardized test results to improve instruction
29. The ubiquitous belief that the Northwestern school culture is one in which students and teachers enjoy spending time
30. The School Climate Committee is a specific avenue for both teachers and students to express concerns
31. The recent implementation of a civics course requirement that provides all students with a heterogeneous grouping experience

32. The development and ongoing implementation of the student advisory program
33. The revision of the advisory curriculum in order to provide students with grade-specific assistance
34. The rotating schedule provides extended time each week for every class period
35. Student load and classes sizes meet the learning needs of students
36. The principal's instructional leadership which is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
37. The open and supportive administration
38. The creation of the Parent Advocacy Committee
39. The wide array of clubs, teams, organizations, and student supports available
40. The strong relationship between and among the Board of Education, superintendent, and principal
41. The ample opportunities provided for student success through academic support services
42. The use of the school website to communicate student support services
43. The health services personnel who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services
44. The sufficient print and non-print materials and technologies available to support students' achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
45. The pleasant and welcoming environment for students to read, research, and work in the library media center
46. The personal education plan developed for each student
47. The recent provision of the Naviance program
48. The staffing levels in all areas of student support services
49. The after-school alternative program (STEP)
50. The range of special education and 504 programs and services
51. The weekly newsletters
52. The collaboration with community/local support services
53. The acquisition and installment of technology throughout the school building
54. The use of alternative energy sources to minimize energy costs
55. The timely manner in which maintenance requests are processed
56. The long-range plans exist to address program, service, staffing, facility, technology, and capital improvement needs
57. The staff and administration actively collaborate in developing the annual school budget
58. The agriculture program actively engages families in school and community-based events
59. The superintendent's development of a budget initiative that provides release time for teachers to align the curriculum with the common core

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement a process to monitor classroom utilization of school-wide rubrics to inform instruction
2. Develop and implement a process to ensure the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom as well as guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations
3. Develop and implement a plan to regularly re-evaluate Northwestern Regional High School's core values that represents all stakeholders in the process and is informed by current research and student achievement of school-wide rubrics
4. Develop and implement a timeline to review, revise, and complete all curricula

5. Develop and implement a process to ensure that all students are provided curriculum that emphasizes depth of understanding and the application of knowledge through inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic learning opportunities
6. Develop and implement a process to provide effective curriculum coordination and vertical articulation between and among all departments within the school and with the middle school
7. Provide sufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research
8. Develop and implement formal procedures that will allow faculty discussion of student work and instructional strategies to become a significant part of the professional culture of the school
9. Ensure that the teacher supervision and evaluation process focuses on improving instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs
10. Formalize the use of common assessments, both formative and summative, to ensure that all students meet the identified learning expectations and 21st century learning skills
11. Develop and implement a plan to improve instructional practices through feedback from a variety of sources, including students, supervisors, and parents
12. Incorporate into the formal process a way by which all students are assured regular assessment on every learning expectation and that this data informs instruction for learning
13. Develop and implement a plan to inform how students and their families of individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
14. Develop and implement a plan for whole-school achievement of 21st century learning expectations to be reported to all stakeholders
15. Allocate appropriate formal time for teachers to collaborate on data analysis and use it to respond to inequities in achievement
16. Communicate consistently and explicitly the objectives, school-wide learning expectations, related unit-specific learning goals, and assessments prior to every unit of study in the school
17. Evaluate the assessments used in individual courses and continue to increase the variety of assessment type
18. Provide training on the effective use of formative assessments to inform instruction
19. Develop a plan by which the grading and reporting practices will be reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning
20. Develop and implement a method by which school-wide civic and social rubrics are used to evaluate students' ability to demonstrate respect for their school, peers, and teachers
21. Ensure that every student has the opportunity to enroll in heterogeneously grouped core courses over the course of his or her high school experience and provide teachers with professional development and strategies for teaching these courses
22. Develop and implement a plan to provide additional time and resources for professional development in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment knowledge and implementation
23. Develop long-term goals for the PLC model
24. Reflect on the current daily schedule to assess whether or not it best suits the needs of students and teachers and revise it as needed
25. Develop plans to prioritize initiatives to provide for the proper training and practice prior to implementation
26. Provide professional development/clarification to assist staff in better understanding how to implement SRBI I and RTI interventions and strategies

27. Establish a means to systemically evaluate the effectiveness of support services (guidance, health, library/media, and special education) in helping students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
28. Create and implement a comprehensive developmental guidance curriculum only if that's what they want to do
29. Establish a process for counselors to meet regularly with the sophomore class
30. Evaluate the impact on the elimination of after school bus service on student opportunities for learning and co-curricular participation
31. Provide adequate funding for professional development and curriculum development
32. Investigate options for increased storage
33. Explore options for additional conferencing areas
34. Centralize communication responsibilities of school website and calendar