

New England Association of Schools and Colleges



Commission on Public Secondary Schools

Report of the Visiting Committee for Colchester High School

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

THE DISTRIBUTION, USE AND SCOPE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

The governing body of the Association is its Board of Trustees which supervises the work of six Commissions: the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education (CIHE), the Commission on Independent Schools (CIS), the Commission 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 Commission. Those Standards are:

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Mission and Expectations for Student Learning
- Curriculum
- Instruction
- Assessment of Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- Leadership and Organization
- 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 Commission'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 Commission 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 Evaluation 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 Colchester High School, a committee of 10 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities, and facilities available for young people. In addition to faculty members, the self-study committees included forty-four students, twenty-two parents, and seven citizens who were on standards committees.

The self-study of Colchester High School extended over a period of 20 school months from December 2008 to September 2010. The visiting committee was pleased to note that students, citizens, parents, and central office personnel joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

Public schools evaluated by the Commission 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 Commission, Colchester High School also used questionnaires developed by The Global Institute at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

The Process Used by the Visiting Committee

A visiting committee of 15 evaluators was assigned by the Commission on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate Colchester High School. The committee members spent four days in Colchester, Vermont, 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 Commission's Standards for Accreditation. Since the evaluators represented public schools and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Colchester High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 45 hours shadowing 15 students for a half day
- a total of 15 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 30 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 on the report was agreed to by team 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 team's judgment will be helpful to the school as it works to improve teaching and learning and to better meet Commission Standards.

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

Overview of Findings

Although the conclusions of the visiting committee on the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation appear in various sections of this report, the committee wishes to highlight some findings in the paragraphs that follow. These findings are not intended to be a summary of the report.

Teaching and Learning at Colchester High School

Teaching and learning are the main focus of Colchester High School and the mission provides the basis and foundation for many of the educational activities of the school. Originally developed by a wide range of stakeholders, the revision process has included a diminished scope of participants. While still a viable document, it is time for a thorough review and revision to take place in order to ensure the mission meets the school's needs and garners ownership of current constituents. The four "Essential Expectations" and their accompanying rubrics can be found throughout the teaching and learning activities. These expectations coupled with their seven "Habits of Mind" are the key elements of what teachers want their students to know, understand, and do. However, the school needs to clarify and include social and civic indicators into the expectations to fulfill the mission statement. When this revision process is completed, the school will have a document that will more completely guide the procedures, policies, and decisions regarding teaching and student learning.

Curriculum guides are well documented for all courses and are routinely used to guide daily classroom work. Problem-solving and inquiry are clearly present in the curriculum, and there are opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking skills as well as authentic application of knowledge. There are extensive opportunities for students to extend learning beyond the classroom, and there is a wide array of co-curricular offerings. There is effective curricular coordination within departments, but more opportunities for collaboration need to be developed across departments and with sending schools in the district. Professional development in the school has had a narrow focus and additional attention needs to be given to professional development activities in curriculum as well as opportunities for faculty members to discuss the curriculum and revision process.

The teachers at Colchester High School are very dedicated, caring of their students and proud of the quality of student learning. They have had significant professional development in differentiated instruction and strive to personalize their instruction to their students' needs. The teachers have a culture of collaboration most evident in the integration of curriculum and instruction of Green House teachers. The collaborative work groups (CWGs) use current research and best practices as a basis for

their discussions. When teachers broaden the focus of the topics in their collaborative work groups to focus on additional topics such as the use of school-wide rubrics, how to engage all students in higher order thinking skills, and additional ways to integrate technology into their instruction, they will more fully realize the power of their collaborative efforts and impact their instruction and student learning.

Along with the school's commitment to differentiated instruction comes an equal commitment to the use of a wide variety of both formative and summative assessment in evaluating student learning. While there is effective assessment of the course-specific expectations for student learning, school-wide expectations expressed in the mission are not effectively assessed, and student achievement is not communicated to students, their families, and the school community. By unifying the assessment of course-specific and school-wide expectations, the school will fully realize the value of assessment as a way to adjust the curriculum and instruction to respond effectively to the learning needs of students.

Support of Teaching and Learning at Colchester High School

The climate of Colchester High school is exemplified by its motto of "Academic excellence in a climate of respect, responsibility, and pride". The entire school staff is involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students. The principal is a strong leader who provides a vision, direction, and focus for student learning and has the support of her faculty, students, and parents. She fosters collaborative and shared leadership responsibilities through her leadership team and is working continually towards school improvement. Teachers have manageable teaching loads, students and parents are provided meaningful decision-making roles as in the teacher-hiring interview process, and there is a well established advisory program. There is a commitment to heterogeneous grouping, professional collaboration, and celebrating student success. While the principal does have the support of the superintendent and school board as well as sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school, a lack of adequate funding inhibits initiatives necessary to prepare and equip students to be successful in the 21st century.

Student support services are dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of the student population. There is a variety of programs and resources available to meet student needs, and all students are afforded equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. There is a comprehensive range of services provided by guidance counselors; health services are proactively involved in students needs; library media services are ample and available; and special education is integrated and inclusive. While there are many positive components of support services, there needs to be a formal process to evaluate the effectiveness of these services to support their work and provide direction for improvement.

Colchester High School is a friendly welcoming school that has a strong connection to its students and parents as well as its local business and higher education community. The school's physical plant is well maintained and adequate for student learning. In spite of the significant successes of the school in meeting the goals of its mission and expectations for student learning, it must struggle to pass its budget and is poised to limit and reduce the programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies necessary to maintain current levels of success. Efforts must be made to develop a relationship to those outside of the immediate school community to increase their level of investment and pride in the education of Colchester's children.

School and Community Profile

Colchester High School is located on a fifty-acre campus in Colchester, Vermont, a growing and diverse town of 17,237 with an active business community. Located on the scenic shore of Lake Champlain, thirty-five miles from the Canadian border and in close proximity to Burlington and Interstate Highway 89, Colchester enjoys access to a wealth of recreational, cultural, social, and educational resources. Currently there are more than 500 businesses in the town of Colchester.

Since 1960, the population of Colchester has tripled from 5,000 to approximately 17,000. Colchester is the fourth largest municipality in Vermont behind Burlington, Rutland and Essex. The average wage in 2008 was \$67,069, and the percentage of people living above the poverty level at that time was 93.7%. Colchester School District has a total student population of 2,170. There are three elementary schools and one middle school. The high school was built in 1975, serves grades nine through twelve, and currently educates 779 students. 85 students attend two regional technical schools in Burlington and Essex Junction. Five students receive instruction in English as a Second Language. More than a dozen nationalities are represented in the student body. 57 tuition students attend Colchester High School at this time, at a cost of \$11,100 per pupil. Approximately 25% of the school population receives the free and reduced lunch program as a direct result of living in homes under the poverty level. The high school age population has remained relatively stable and age appropriate.

At this time, approximately 800 students are enrolled in the high school. Colchester High School actively supports international student exchange programs as a way to provide diversity and enrich the experience of students. In 2002, The Department of Education named Colchester High School one of ten *Vermont High Schools on the Move*. In 2007, Colchester High School was awarded the Siemens Award for Advanced Placement. In 2010, Colchester High School was honored by having two teachers named as recipients' the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science and Mathematics teaching.

Approximately 90% of the Class of 2010 entered the school together as freshmen four years ago. Representatives of the high school link this stability to the school's proven success with a variety of learners. In 2008, the attendance rate for students was 92.49%; during the following year, it was 94.36%. For the past three years over 70% of graduates went onto post secondary education. Approximately 2% of students pursue the military, and approximately 20% of our graduates go directly into the work force.

Colchester High School offers courses and activities designed to meet the needs of a wide range of student abilities, interests, and learning styles. The school is organized in two houses: Green House and Blue House. Courses in the Green House are designed to foster a sense of community and to build a foundation for more specialized Blue House courses. The Green House (grades 9 and 10) is primarily heterogeneously grouped using differentiated instruction to meet the needs of and challenge all learners. In grades 9 and 10 students complete most of their core graduation requirements. In 9th grade, humanities teams integrate instruction and make significant connections to science and mathematics. In 10th grade students also learn in interdisciplinary, differentiated humanities teams: The American Experience. The Green House mathematics program differentiates algebra and geometry, providing a challenging course of study for all students. Beginning with the class of 2007 students may earn honors distinction through high achievement on the habits of learning rubric used in many of the courses in the Green House. In the Blue House (grades 11 and 12) students who seek advanced level work may enroll in semester courses and pursue honors level work. The "Honors" designation will appear on the transcript of any student who fulfills the requirements of the honors contract. In science students may be recommended for accelerated courses and/or may enroll in two lab courses in the same year. The mathematics sequence extends through AP Calculus. Students who elect to accelerate beyond the CHS curriculum may study college-level courses through dual enrollment. Last year, students completed 112 courses from Community College of Vermont, University of Vermont, Vermont Technical College and Champlain College. Colchester is proud to announce that we are now a part of Virtual High School, which will provide more diverse and on-line course offerings for our students.

Colchester High School offers a variety of alternative paths for students as well. They may earn elective credit through the Options Program, which includes community service, outside course work, student aide assignments, work study, and independent study. In addition, students for whom the traditional programs are not successful may enter Target Graduation, an outcomes-based graduation program.

Graduation requirements at Colchester High School are in compliance with state and federal regulations. In all academic areas, students must demonstrate proficiency with clearly stated content and standards in order to receive credit. Specific graduation requirements are found in the program of studies or the school profile. Individual course standards are directly linked to the *Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* and our school-wide essential expectations. Student achievement in each course is reported with a quarterly letter grade, and parents are provided with progress reports in every course at the middle of each quarter. Students earn honors designation (honor roll and high honor roll) by earning grades of B- and better or A- and better, respectively.

Colchester High School is fortunate to have an active community and parent presence. Every hiring committee at CHS must contain at minimum of one parent and one student, but often times there will be more than one of each. CHS frequently holds informational parent evenings on new initiatives, or to just provide the opportunity to general parent feedback. The several athletic boosters and project graduation groups chaperone school activities, sell concessions at sporting events, and provide valuable parent and community participation in co-curricular decision-making. The football boosters, a separate group, fund the entire football program at CHS. Parental attendance at school events and athletic contests ranges from average to high, depending on the event.

Community and business leaders have joined together and raised money for a community scholars program that provides yearly scholarships to CHS students. Individual benefactors, businesses, private groups and fraternal organizations annually contribute significant funds for scholarships as well as for special events sponsored through the school. Over forty scholarships from these many sources are awarded to graduating seniors each year. Each month, a luncheon at an area restaurant is sponsored by a local business to recognize student achievement in a variety of areas. Local businesses sponsor the student-of-the-month luncheons designed to recognize a variety of achievements by high school students. In addition, several students attend either the Essex or Burlington Technical Center. Plans for four-year technical center in Chittenden County are strongly supported by the town's business community.

Local businesses and the industrial community provide strong support to the school by supporting an employment program, annual Green House Career Day: Fast Forward, and numerous food drives, fundraising events, and blood drives. However the school struggle with overall community support during budget season. The biggest challenge that CHS will face over the next five years is decreasing enrollment, decreasing revenue, and looming staff reductions.

Colchester High School is fortunate to have a plethora of other educational opportunities in the area available to students. Students may attend and transfer credit to CHS from the University of Vermont (UVM), Burlington College, Saint Michael's College, Trinity College, and the Community College of Vermont. The cost of these transfer credits is borne by student and their parents. Students may also pursue a CHS diploma through the Adult Diploma Program conducted by the State Department of Education. There is no cost to students for this program. Students who have received their GED may return to CHS to pursue the additional credits necessary to graduate from the high school to conduct meetings, workshops, and training sessions unrelated to the CHS curriculum.

CHS recognizes students for their accomplishments through several means: student of the month lunch, awards assemblies, pep-rallies, underclass awards night, class night, honor roll, and the honor's banquet. In addition, local newspapers sponsor academic and athletic awards, and they are committed to providing news coverage on our achievements.

Colchester High School has engaged in several school-wide initiatives to improve the school, but more importantly student learning. Based on the school's mission CHS has firmly embedded four essential expectations into all curricula at CHS over the past five years. The number of Advanced Placement

offerings for students has increased with the addition of AP Chemistry and AP Probability and Statistics. CHS students are required to participate in several exhibition evenings for the community through required courses such as: senior seminar civics and essential topics science. Finally, the CHS New teacher mentoring program has undergone several changes in an effort to train new teachers.

School improvement planning occurs in three ways: administrative team: a school-based administration team of four administrators; district-wide curriculum team: a team of k-12 content specific teachers who meet to review and make modifications to our curriculum; a school leadership team comprised of four administrators, and six team leaders who meet weekly to direct the implementation of plans from the first two groups and other building based and/or district-wide based committees. Colchester High School has several building-based committees who work on focused goals for the school. For the past five years the district has developed a district-wide action plan that guided the work of each building under one umbrella.

The Leadership Team at Colchester High School takes school improvement very seriously, and this group is responsible for analyzing all of the student assessment data to develop a building based improvement plan to increase student performance. The school's mission and expectation for learning are widely communicated but it may be time to revisit both documents. All said, the community is proud and supportive of Colchester High School.

Mission Statement and Expectations for Student Learning

Colchester High School

DISTRICT MISSION

The mission of the Colchester School District – *proud of its respect for individual needs and its commitment to integrated learning* - is to ensure that all students will develop the academic proficiency, social skill, and character to be fulfilled, responsible, and involved citizens; we will accomplish this by providing diverse, challenging educational experiences in partnership with families and the community.

COLCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL'S ESSENTIAL EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

- 1.0: Reading: CHS graduates comprehend, interpret, and evaluate a wide range of written material.
- 2.0 Writing: CHS graduates write using standard English for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- 3.0 Problem Solving: CHS graduates are able to problem-solve in a variety of contexts and content areas.
- 4.0 Learning Habits: CHS graduates practice learning habits that promote their learning and the learning of others.

Colchester High School's Motto

Equity and Excellence in a Climate of Respect, Responsibility, and Pride!

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

**MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS
FOR STUDENT LEARNING**

CURRICULUM

INSTRUCTION

**ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT
LEARNING**

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

1

MISSION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

The school's mission statement describes the essence of what the school as a community of learners is seeking to achieve. The expectations for student learning are based on and drawn from the school's mission statement. These expectations are the fundamental goals by which the school continually assesses the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Every component of the school community must focus on enabling all students to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.

1. The mission statement and expectations for student learning shall be developed by the school community and approved and supported by the professional staff, the school board, and any other school-wide governing organization.
2. The school's mission statement shall represent the school community's fundamental values and beliefs about student learning.
3. The school shall define school-wide academic, civic, and social learning expectations that:
 - are measurable;
 - reflect the school's mission.
4. For each academic expectation in the mission the school shall have a targeted level of successful achievement identified in a rubric.
5. The school shall have indicators by which it assesses the school's progress in achieving school-wide civic and social expectations.
6. The mission statement and the school's expectations for student learning shall guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school and shall be evident in the culture of the school.
7. The school shall review regularly the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a variety of data to ensure that they reflect student needs, community expectations, the district mission, and state and national standards.

Conclusions

The mission statement and expectations for student learning of Colchester High School (CHS) was developed in 1995 by a committee representative of the Colchester community at that time, but the committee did not include many of the current faculty and staff members. In 2004, the mission statement was revisited and a district vision and essential expectations (EEs) for the high school were established from it. Currently these have been distributed widely, but the school's professional staff has not fully and effectively utilized them. Overall, the faculty and students of CHS lack ownership of the mission, as it is more of a district vision than an educational instrument for the high school. Interviews and the self-study survey also established that a majority of the teaching staff members stated that the mission statement is understood but is not extensively utilized by the school in general. Many teachers profess to utilize the statement and/or EEs for student learning regularly and effectively. However, other teachers admit to not using the mission statement other than for their own occasional reflective practice, and a majority of students indicated only a familiarity with the mission. Many students and teachers are currently guided by the EEs of the school as well as by the CHS Motto. This was evident throughout classroom observations where students and teachers alike repeatedly refer to the EEs when referencing their work product and assessments. The mission statement provides a common language for teachers and a vision for the school and district, but some teachers are not actively or effectively employing the statement in their instruction. Moreover, the Endicott Survey and interviews suggest that parents are not generally aware of the details of the mission statement but support its importance in everyday instruction. The mission statement and essential expectations for student learning are products of broad-based committee work separated by almost ten years from current school use, and these documents lack the school-wide utilization and cohesiveness that is needed to guide the school's expectations for student learning. Thus, the mission and expectations use must be brought up to date, made relevant, and consistently used in daily teaching and learning (self-study, observations, student work, students teachers, Endicott Survey)

Although the teachers and administrators at CHS consistently cite their desire to individualize instruction and to incite challenging educational experiences as described in the mission statement, the mission statement is not the focused representation of the school community's current fundamental values and beliefs about student learning. Teachers report that the mission statement is reflected in only some of their work and of the school's approach to instruction; they refer to the mission statement as historic and more of an underlying theme, than a direction or active school focus. Teachers, students, support staff, and parents unanimously agree that their shared fundamental values and beliefs are exemplified in the EEs. Also, there is wide-spread acknowledgment that the mission statement's reference to meeting individualized needs is crucial to the work of the school and that the statement could serve as a driver for better articulated expectations throughout the school's curriculum and school community. Because the statement of mission is not longer universally agreed upon, it cannot serve as the essence of what the school as a community is trying to achieve. Consequently, the mission expectations for student learning no longer truly represent the school community's fundamental beliefs. (student work, teachers, district administrators)

Academic expectations are clearly defined and measurable. Civic and social learning expectations are less clearly defined and they are not readily measurable through the school's curriculum and programming, and collectively, these expectations only nominally reflect the school's mission statement. Academic expectations are clearly defined and assessed using the EE rubrics. These rubrics are used throughout the school building and included in course curricula. Social and civic expectations are addressed within the teacher advisory (TA) service projects, the 10th grade Civics Unit, the 12th grade Senior Civics Seminar, and some Know, Understand, Do units (KUDs), but they are not measured in any way. Elements of social and civic expectations are found in the EE rubrics, but they relate only to soft skills and lack clear measurability. The language of the mission statement is not currently used throughout the school-wide rubrics. Even though many school professionals and administrators express satisfaction with the civic and social outcomes for students at the school, the lack of measurable indicators makes it impossible to accurately assess the status of student outcomes and the progress towards social and civic expectations. (self-study, panel presentation, teachers)

CHS has developed well-written, thoughtful rubrics for assessing students and has identified targeted levels of successful achievement within each rubric. While there are aspects of the mission statement within the rubrics, many components of the mission in its current form are not represented. These rubrics are linked to the school's four EEs instead of the mission statement. These rubrics were developed through a reflective process involving appropriate stakeholders and were implemented during the school year 2007-2008. There are four comprehensive rubrics based on the EEs intended for school-wide use. However, while some teachers and programs are utilizing these rubrics mindfully, many teachers are adapting these rubrics to a point where the initial intended language is no longer recognizable. Some members of the faculty are also using their own rubrics for lack of curricular connection between the school-wide rubrics and their respective content and assessments. The school is using rubrics to assess student work, and there is agreement around the targeted levels of success but the implementation of the school rubrics is inconsistent throughout all content areas. (self-study, sub-committee, teachers, student work)

There are no indicators for social and civic expectations at CHS, and assessment in these areas is limited overall. The school has not identified any direct measurement for the social and civic expectations. Comments by teachers, administrators, board members, and parents affirm the importance that the school community attaches to those expectations, and CHS proudly cites student achievements in social and civic endeavors. The school does, for example, include a community service component in its graduation standards, and senior seminar incorporates a community-based learning project. Teachers have expressed frustration in finding ways to measure these expectations for all students. While some aspects of the rubrics infer these skills, the rubrics do not currently assess their effectiveness clearly. There are, however, significant opportunities for civic and social involvement through clubs, sports, and organizations at CHS, but these opportunities do not involve all students and lack consistency and formality in their processes. Although the CHS community passionately expresses the importance it attaches to the social and civic expectations, the lack of indicators has limited the school's ability to measure all students' achievement of social and civic expectations for student learning. (self-study, teachers, parents)

Parts of the mission statement drive decision-making and the setting of the policy and procedure of the school, and aspects of the EEs also impact policy, procedure, and practice providing an underlying culture for the school. In the self-study survey and interviews, teachers insist that they understand and utilize the mission statement and expectations, and even teachers who express uncertainty about the statements admit that they utilize it for reflective practice. The school board and teachers explained that the mission statement, in particular, reflects the culture of the school with its emphasis on individualization, academic proficiency, and civic and social outcomes. The school board and teachers alike believe that differentiated instruction is the focus of all instruction. Many teachers express the belief that the mission statement is more of a vision for the district and less of a statement of what the school is seeking to achieve. Many teachers cite the EEs as the driving force behind instruction, policy, and procedure. Some state that the CHS Motto is a more accurate version of the school's mission statement. However, statements from the school board express uncertainty about the instructional priorities and imperatives of the school, aside from differentiated instruction. While they all agree that the focus should be on the education of the individual student, there are differences in vision and overall measurement of success. Faculty members believe that the public is not well informed of the needs or instructional goals of the high school. A resulting example of this is the staffing cutback of the writing workshop due to budget cuts, affecting as many as 60% of CHS students who used it to improve their writing skills across disciplines. While there is agreement on the principles behind the mission statement and expectations for student learning, until the students, parents, school board, superintendent, and professional staff come to consensus on the mission and expectations it will not guide the procedures, policies, and decisions of the school. (teachers, school board, district administrators, parents)

CHS has not regularly reviewed its mission. Members of both the faculty and the school board have expressed commitments to adopt a review process for the mission statement; this process began last January 2010 and is ongoing with no definite timeline. The review process used has been sporadic and disjointed. In past attempts, any substantive review was focused on essential expectations and not the mission statement. Currently a panel of teachers who support the full use of the mission statement and

expectations stated that they have been informed of a new initiative by the superintendent to review the district vision (mission) and they hope that it will continue to involve appropriate stakeholders. This may eventually allow the school to write its own mission statement consistent with district verbiage, goals, and intent. The faculty leaders expressed some doubt in terms of a timeline and logistics for the process and point out that there is no real understanding about the connection between the district work and the needs of the school. The current mission statement does not represent the whole school community, causing faculty members, administrators, and students to differ over goals and learner expectations. (self-study, teachers, leadership team, and school board)

Commendations

1. The teachers who embrace and reinforce the essential expectations throughout their instruction, assessment, and professional practice
2. The students who understand the essential expectations and embrace the school's motto as part of their culture
3. The academic rubrics that measure learner expectations and identify the targeted level of success
4. The community-based learning project during senior seminar that endeavors to reinforce learner expectations and create civic and social ties between the students and the community
5. The faculty's advocacy for and actions to maintain programs such as writing workshop and math lab which embody the essential expectations of the school

Recommendations

1. Review and revise the mission statement and expectations for student learning using a process that includes all stakeholders to ensure it reflects student needs and community expectations
2. Develop and implement a timeline for the regular review and revision of the mission and expectations for student learning
3. Define civic and social expectations for student learning and identify measurable indicators for each
4. Create additional programs to educate the public about the school's mission, learner expectations, and program connections to the mission
5. Improve communication and understanding among faculty, administration, superintendent, and school board regarding the separation and alignment of district vision and school mission
6. Develop a process to ensure the school's mission and expectations for student learning guide the procedures, policies and decisions of the school

2

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

CURRICULUM

The curriculum, which includes coursework, co-curricular activities, and other school-approved educational experiences, is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission statement and expectations for student learning. The curriculum links the school's beliefs, its expectations for student learning, and its instructional practices. The strength of that link is dependent upon the professional staff's commitment to and involvement in a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum.

1. Each curriculum area shall identify those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible.
2. The curriculum shall be aligned with the school-wide academic expectations and shall ensure that all students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each of those expectations.
3. The written curriculum shall:
 - prescribe content;
 - integrate relevant school-wide learning expectations;
 - identify course-specific learning goals;
 - suggest instructional strategies;
 - suggest assessment techniques including the use of school-wide rubrics.
4. The curriculum shall engage all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking as well as provide opportunities for the authentic application of knowledge and skills.
5. The curriculum shall:
 - be appropriately integrated;
 - emphasize depth of understanding over breadth of coverage.
6. The school shall provide opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus.
7. There shall be effective curricular coordination and articulation between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district.
8. Instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, staffing levels, and the resources of the library/media center shall be sufficient to allow for the implementation of the curriculum.
9. The professional staff shall be actively involved in the ongoing development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum based on assessments of student performance in achieving the school's academic expectations and course-specific learning goals.
10. The school shall commit sufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to the development, evaluation, and revision of curriculum.
11. Professional development activities shall support the development and implementation of the curriculum.

Conclusions

Colchester High School (CHS) has identified school-wide academic expectations and has begun the process of identifying curriculum areas responsible for each. School-wide academic expectations are expressed in four essential expectations (EEs), reading, writing, problem-solving, and learning habits. The school's curriculum is in the form of syllabi and Know/Understand/Do units (KUDs) which identify expectations on a course by course basis but not by curricular areas in general. Faculty members agree that the task of assigning responsibility for each expectation has not been completed, but it has begun at faculty meetings where an inventory has been taken of current practices. The CHS published K-12 curriculum does specify responsibility for school-wide expectations and for Vermont Grade Expectations (GEs) by curriculum area, although high school teachers acknowledge that it is not used as a guiding document. The absence of department-specific responsibilities for specific academic expectations greatly hinders consistency in the knowledge of and fulfillment of those expectations. (teachers, central office administrators, self-study)

The school's curriculum is aligned with school-wide academic expectations. The curriculum for individual courses as contained in the written "Red Books" or on the shared drive is linked to the EEs and to Vermont state standards. However, the written curriculum is not directly linked with the school's mission. Curriculum guides clearly describe specific learning experiences (KUDs) which provide practice in mastering academic expectations, including several varied approaches to course content and writing/reading/problem-solving exercises. The curriculum provides all students with the opportunity to practice and achieve the expectations. Class-specific and school-wide rubrics are used for some projects, allowing students to self-assess their work, but many projects are still using checklists without full rubrics. Support systems are in place to help all students succeed, including the math and writing labs which provide aid to students throughout the school day as well as academic study halls. The Colchester Alternative Program (CAP) system makes active use of the shared curriculum to offer the same general curriculum in an alternative setting with student-based modifications. Thus, the school's written curriculum and academic support system provide opportunities for all students to practice and achieve expectations. (student work, teacher meetings, teacher interviews, parent meetings, project samples)

Written curriculum guides prescribe specific content, including vocabulary and concepts, for each course, and include course-specific learning goals as Know, Understand, Do (KUDs). These guides are followed by all. The completeness of these guides varies from course to course, but all include at least an outline of course content and major learning experiences. The guides include references to which school-wide learning expectations (EE) are addressed in the course although it is not always clear how the specific expectations were chosen or how they are specifically assessed as school-wide rubrics are not always included in assessment suggestions. The guides contain recommended assessment methods and instructional strategies, including specific labs, projects, written assignments or types of problem-solving and often include course-specific rubrics for assessing these products. Teachers, especially those new to the profession or those starting new teaching assignments, report that these guides play a strong role in their course planning. Some guides contain assessments using portions of the school-wide rubrics, but it is not clear if they are widely applied. A well-documented curriculum, including course specific goals and school-wide rubrics is needed and essential to provide clarity and consistency to teachers and students as they strive to achieve the school's stated learning expectations. (student work, curriculum guides, teacher meetings, teacher interviews)

The curriculum engages all students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. Students routinely engage in problem-solving and some form of inquiry in classes, notably in humanities, mathematics, and science. From curriculum guides, classroom visits, and teacher interviews, it is apparent that this emphasis crosses the spectrum of student abilities so that students in all classes receive the opportunity to engage in open-ended activities with problem-solving components. Students in the CAP program also engage in these tasks, modified as needed by their instructors. Many of these activities are more properly called guided inquiry as teachers frequently provide written guides and prompts to direct learners. Most inquiry and problem-solving projects do not use the school-wide

rubrics, and many appear to be assessed based on teacher-specific checklists so it is difficult to assess the level of student engagement in mastering school-wide expectations. All students are required to take humanities, math, and science classes with problem-solving components as part of their graduation requirements. Some of the inquiry and problem-solving assignments require authentic application of student knowledge and skills. Senior seminar projects require students to identify a problem, research the scope of the problem, propose solutions, and then apply their proposed solutions in real-life situations. Opportunities exist, including the Model U.N., poetry slams, and art exhibits which allow some students to practice their skills. The CHS written curriculum clearly prescribes higher-order thinking and problem-solving opportunities for all students but not necessarily for all courses. Until school-wide rubrics are fully implemented students will not be consistently engaged in these skills. (curriculum guides, classroom observation, teachers, student work)

There is widespread integration of the curriculum in grades 9 and 10, and the curriculum consistently emphasizes depth of understanding over breadth of coverage. English and history courses for all freshmen and sophomores are team-taught by interdisciplinary teams. Freshmen study "Thinkers and Revolutionaries" designed to cover world history and literature, and sophomores study "The American Experience". Teachers of these classes share a common planning block. There is little interdisciplinary curriculum planning in classes for upper-classmen. There is a school-wide buy-in of the EE rubrics which encourage the teaching of four fundamental skills in a consistent manner in all classes. It is understood that all teachers are expected to use these rubrics, and the process to take inventory has begun as to which classes address which skills. Examples of the rubrics used for assessment abound in the curriculum notebooks, and many are closely modeled upon the school-wide rubrics although some are unique to the particular assignment. Students report that they are familiar with the EEs and the corresponding rubrics. Teachers routinely include readings and laboratory experiences which allow students to cover topics in detail. Student projects, including the senior seminar, require specific demonstration of depth of understanding. The program of studies allows students to explore disciplines in detail, including the extensive Advanced Placement (AP) program, VHS course offerings, advanced courses in specific topics in art and English language arts, and the essential topic classes in science. Individual teachers and parents express concern about a focus on breadth in underclassmen humanities classes, but it has been agreed that these deficiencies are addressed in upper level classes. Considerable efforts toward integration in the curriculum, especially for 9th and 10th graders promote clarity and consistency in achieving the school's stated goals, but there is less integration in grades 11 and 12. The school curriculum has a sufficient emphasis on depth of understanding of content to fulfill school learning expectations, and integration of material is a recognized goal. (curriculum guides, teachers, parents, program of studies)

Colchester High School provides opportunities for all students to extend learning beyond the normal course offerings and the school campus. Most of these offerings are geared toward seniors in the form of a senior seminar project. Several classes and programs involve mentoring, shadowing, or internship opportunities. Students who seek advanced options have opportunities with local institutions of higher education, and the school participates with Virtual High School to offer classes than only a few students select. Senior Seminar is a well documented graduation requirement. Students are required to choose an issue of concern to them, research it, and create and carry out their action plan. Also, AP courses require community service, shadowing, or internship activities after the exam is given in May. The opportunities program is an employment program begun for the special education program that has extended to all students. In 2008-9, it served 137 students, 53 of whom were on IEP or 504 plans and 84 of whom were regular education students. Funding requirements have required an end to the outreach for regular education students, however, a remedial summer school has been offered with enrollment averaging about 50 students in recent years, but due to budget constraints it was not offered in 2010. The school offers a range of co-curricular activities including sports, clubs, music, and drama. Last year, about 33% of all students participated in the fall and spring seasons and about 25% in the winter. Clubs range from service-type (CHS Cares) to academic (Math League) to the arts (drama, music). There is a community service recommendation for all co-curriculars although students report that it is not consistently followed. Opportunities beyond the campus and normal course offerings connect all students to their community and help to deliver the goals of the mission to students who seek enrichment, but this does not apply to all students. (KUDs, program of studies, students, teachers)

Colchester High School has effective curricular coordination and articulation among academic areas, but limited coordination with sending schools. Coordination with sending schools takes place, but is not a strong influence on high school planning. There has been a strong effort to articulate the curriculum of individual classes and “Red Notebooks” have been compiled for each class. There is an initiative to document the material in a shared computer network. Teachers report that coordination efforts more recently have been focused on differentiated instruction and assessment, and curriculum revision has been a lower priority. Some per diem summer work has been authorized. In the self-study the school reports that any curriculum coordination between departments is informal, but it is widely recognized as a necessary next step in the process that began with the adoption of the EEs. Instructional leaders do meet with sending schools to review curriculum. The district curriculum coordinator established a plan in 2006 to review and update all K-12 curricula over a five-year period and that plan is on schedule with only social studies, guidance, and the library curriculum to be completed. These plans do specify department specific responsibilities and sequential topic maps, and teachers from all schools in the district have participated in their development. Teachers interviewed, however, note that the K-12 curricula are not seen as guiding documents, and that there is no mechanism in place to monitor whether or not a curriculum is being followed. Colchester High School does not foster involvement of all faculty members in curriculum review. (self study, teachers, central office administrators)

Instructional materials, technology, facilities, equipment, supplies, and staffing are sufficient to allow for implementation of the curriculum. The school has computer labs large enough for class instruction and three mobile units of laptop computers routinely used in classrooms. The school has wireless and hard-wired networks with reliable connectivity and a professional IT staff member to provide support. Most classrooms have at least three computers for student use and LCD projectors, and many classrooms (notably math and science) have interactive whiteboards. Courses make use of recent textbooks, including some online texts. Some classrooms are equipped with voice projection systems. Faculty members have shown creativity and flexibility in finding ways to maintain access to the math and writing labs throughout the school day. Technology, staffing, and curriculum materials thus support the curriculum at CHS. Although sufficient in numbers, the laptop computers, do not have effective battery charge after the first use in the morning and are thus less useful for afternoon classes. Textbooks are available but not always in sufficient number for course enrollments, limiting their use to the classroom only. The library has sufficient resources to support the curriculum. Some classrooms (math, science) have reached their maximum student capacity, partly as a result of inadequate space to store materials. Athletic facilities and art/drama facilities have been well-maintained and support co-curricular activities. Current materials and staffing support the curriculum in general. (students, observations, teacher interviews, teacher meetings, support staff members, school tour)

The professional staff is involved in consistent analysis in the schools Collaborative Work Groups (CWGs) with the use of student work to evaluate and revise the delivered curriculum based on assessments of student performance. However these groups do not assess students specifically in relation to school wide expectations, and the school has not focused on curriculum documents. Teachers report that, following an ambitious initiative four years ago to articulate the curriculum in KUDs, revision has been done mostly on an informal basis and has not been formally documented. Some teachers of common classes have common planning time, but staff development time is dedicated to other tasks. Some curriculum revision does take place as a result of assessments of student performance, specifically NECAP results. Some funding has been allocated for math teachers to update curriculum in response to these results. At the district level, all students are assessed using the NECAP. For local assessments, the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) literary assessment, writing assessments, and learning inventories are used. CHS teachers report that they are not involved in any formal review of these results for the purpose of revising curriculum. Faculty members receive formal staff development focused on assessment and instruction but not curriculum. There is a regular curriculum review cycle at the district level, but teachers report that it has not yet had an impact on the curriculum that is taught. While the curriculum for writing and math has been adjusted in response to NECAP results, CHS does not use data from standardized tests to inform revision of the curriculum, and there is no process in place to ensure that all teachers are involved in curriculum development and revision. CHS is in the process of implementing a new evaluation system for teachers. Its effectiveness in assuring that the taught curriculum is the same as the written curriculum cannot be known at this time, but it will be essential to the continued success of the work that has already been done in this area. Thus continued curriculum

revision has been neglected in favor of instruction and assessment so that there is no clear connection between curriculum and assessment and instruction. (teachers, district curriculum director, curriculum documents)

CHS has provided insufficient time, financial resources, and personnel to support the development and revision of curriculum. The school has arranged professional development time to permit collaborative teacher groups with general goals aligned with either assessment or curriculum, and teachers report that informal curriculum evaluation and revision is included as part of professional development at the end of each year. Revisions to curriculum are also made during the academic year through informal collaborations, especially in co-taught classes, facilitated by the class materials located on the common drive. There is documentation that a focus on curriculum has been part of formal end-of-year professional development in the last two years. Individual teachers report that they received professional development time and financial assistance to pursue professional development opportunities leading to curriculum revision, including funding for summer workshops for departments or collaborative units. However, teachers and administrators also report that it has recently become much more difficult to get approval for professional development requests. Thus, CHS has devoted insufficient time and resources towards curriculum development, evaluation, and revision which have an impact on the school fulfilling its mission and expectations for student learning. (teacher interviews, teacher meetings, leadership team, curriculum committee, professional development documentation)

Professional development activities at CHS have not effectively supported development and implementation of the written curriculum. The school has placed a great emphasis on professional development involving differentiated instruction and assessment methods in recent years, which has had an impact on evaluation and revision of curriculum. The school has arranged, during their collaborative work groups, formal presentations on curriculum delivery to encourage teacher reflection. Teachers, as individuals and collaborative groups, report that they have received resources to participate in workshops or bring speakers devoted to curriculum development. CHS does not include curriculum development as a significant part of its professional development which does not foster improved student learning. (teacher interviews, teacher meetings, professional development activities)

Commendations:

1. The presence of written curriculum for all course offerings
2. The curriculum guides that are routinely used to guide daily classroom work
3. The use of problem-solving and inquiry as a routine part of classroom work
4. The student's opportunities for authentic applications of knowledge and skills
5. Extensive opportunities for students to extend learning beyond CHS course offerings
6. Extensive co-curricular offerings, including athletics, arts, and clubs geared to student interests

Recommendations:

1. Develop a document in which each curriculum area identifies those school-wide academic expectations for which it is responsible
2. Ensure that all teachers in all courses regularly consult and follow written curriculum documents
3. Align curriculum with academic expectations to ensure consistent use of the school-wide rubrics and ensure that students have sufficient opportunity to practice and achieve each expectation
4. Integrate school-wide rubrics into all curricula
5. Ensure effective curricular coordination between academic areas within the school and with sending schools in the district

6. Provide regular formal opportunities for professional staff to be meaningfully engaged in the ongoing development, evaluation and revision of curriculum based on the assessments of student performance in achieving the school-wide academic expectations and course specific learning goals
7. Commit additional time to curriculum development, evaluation, and implementation
8. Provide additional professional development activities to support the development and implementation of the curriculum

3

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

INSTRUCTION

The quality of instruction in a school is the single most important factor affecting the quality of student learning, the achievement of expectations for student learning, the delivery of the curriculum, and the assessment of student progress. Instructional practices must be grounded in the school's mission and expectations for student learning, supported by research in best practice, and refined and improved based on identified student needs. Teachers are expected to be reflective about their instructional strategies and to collaborate with their colleagues about instruction and student learning.

1. Instructional strategies shall be consistent with the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning.
2. Instructional strategies shall:
 - personalize instruction;
 - make connections across disciplines;
 - engage students as active learners;
 - engage students as self-directed learners;
 - involve all students in higher order thinking to promote depth of understanding;
 - provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge or skills;
 - promote student self-assessment and self-reflection.
3. Teachers shall use feedback from a variety of sources including other teachers, students, supervisors, and parents as a means of improving instruction.
4. Teachers shall be expert in their content area, knowledgeable about current research on effective instructional approaches, and reflective about their own practices.
5. Discussion of instructional strategies shall be a significant part of the professional culture of the school.
6. Technology shall be integrated into and supportive of teaching and learning.
7. The school's professional development program shall be guided by identified instructional needs and shall provide opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies.
8. Teacher supervision and evaluation processes shall be used to improve instruction for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs.

Conclusions

In Colchester High School (CHS), aspects of the school's mission statement and expectations for student learning are demonstrated in instructional strategies, but there is a range of implementation and consistency. Specific school-wide rubrics for Essential Expectations (EEs) are used in instruction, but there is no consistent formal connection to the school's mission statement. Instructional strategies related to civic expectations and educational experiences are not clearly defined in the EEs and therefore are not consistently found in classroom instruction. School-wide civic expectations are not directly addressed until senior seminar. Educational experiences in partnership with the community are increasingly widespread but are not readily available to underclassmen. Whereas school-wide social expectations are rarely addressed directly in instruction, the academic expectations are consistently seen although they are not named. The EEs of Reading and Writing are addressed consistently in most classes, and math and science classes address problem solving regularly; learning habits are best addressed in unified arts classes. CHS Learning Styles Week for humanities students encourages teachers to focus instruction on addressing different learning styles in the classroom. The lack of formal reference to civic and social expectations in the Essential Expectations combined with inconsistent implementation of the EEs inhibits the full implementation of the mission and student achievement of expectations for student learning. (students, parents, teachers, Endicott Survey)

Instructional strategies personalize instruction, make connections across disciplines, engage students as active and self-directed learners, provide students with higher order thinking opportunities that promote depth of understanding, provide opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills, and promote student self-assessment and self-reflection. Faculty dedication to student learning leads to personalization of instruction. Instructional strategies include Socratic seminars, chalk-talks, think-pair-share, inquiry-based laboratory experiments, and skits. According to the self-study survey, over 80% of students feels comfortable going to their teacher for assistance. Student work illustrates authentic and meaningful instructional practices used by the faculty as well as regular student application of knowledge and skills. However, these instructional practices do not engage all students as active and self-directed learners, as evidenced by limited instruction to promote higher order thinking in grades 9 and 10 Green House Humanities. Cross-disciplinary instruction is intentional and consistent in Green House Humanities classes but is otherwise sporadic. Some Collaborative Work Groups (CWGs) are taking advantage of cross-disciplinary opportunities. There is an understanding among faculty members that broad integration of instruction must be preceded by increased integration of curriculum. Widespread use of portfolios asks students to review and reflect on their learning. Personalized instruction is often based on identified student needs because of the strong connection between a staff member and students, particularly with humanities classes. The variety of instructional strategies supports student learning and delivery of the curriculum, but the range of instructional practices is not consistently applied throughout all classes. (students, parents, teachers, self-study)

Teachers regularly use feedback from other teachers to improve instruction, but use of input from students and parents is more sporadic and less formal. Collaboration and examination of student work for the purpose of improving instructional practices is done by department, by teachers with common planning time, and by some CWGs. Special education teachers work with classroom teachers to modify work for special education students in a team approach, allowing for reflection on and improvement of instructional practices. There is a required class evaluation by students at the midterm and final point of a course, but there is no formal process for utilizing the information, and there appears to be only sporadic use of the information gathered. There is no formal process for parent feedback outside of parental input in IEP goals. Parents are enthusiastic about the planned implementation of the PowerSchool initiative which will give them an increased awareness of classroom instructional practices and of student work. The new teacher evaluation process implemented last year follows the Danielson model. Its language lends itself to valuable instruction oriented conversation transpiring between teachers and supervisors. Reflection on instruction is improved by collaborative collegial discussions among and between teachers that is increasing with supervisors as a result of the new teacher evaluation process, but until a formal process coordinating feedback from all sources is implemented instructional improvement will be limited. (teachers, parents, students)

Teachers are experts in their content area and knowledgeable in research on effective instructional approaches and best practices. All teachers are content experts as evidenced by certification and Highly Qualified Teacher status as based on the federal No Child Left Behind standards. The Endicott Survey shows that 58.4% of the faculty holds advanced graduate degrees. Additionally, 83.7% of students feels that their teachers know their subject material well. Teachers have had extensive professional development on Differentiated Instruction (DI) from nationally recognized specialists and consider DI to be a faculty-wide area of expertise. CWGs routinely and formally require teachers to reflect on their practices. CWGs, department meetings, and faculty meetings are regular forums for teachers to study and share research-based best practices on DI, writing effective rubrics, cognitive development, and reading strategies. The result of this combination is a faculty and administration that is creative, informed, and motivated to try research-based practices in the classroom. (teachers, Endicott Survey, students, classroom observations, school board)

Formal discussion of instructional strategies is a significant part of the professional culture at Colchester High School. All teachers are a part of CWGs that meet once or twice a month, most often at faculty meetings. These peer groups decide on a mutual instructional goal or need and then develop a plan of action to address the goal or need. After implementing the action plan, the group members compare and discuss their findings. The principal describes this as a way for teachers to discuss and share best practices. The structure of these groups is formal. The overall theme for each year is chosen by the principal, but each CWG works to develop its own action plan within the theme. The action plan must be submitted to a CWG coordinator, and at the end of the school year, the CWGs present what they gained from their work. Faculty members speak highly of these groups, noting that their work in these groups directly impacts what happens in the classroom. Teachers comment that they have looked at student work, collected data to inform a hypothesis, and tried different instructional strategies learned from their research or professional development. Formal groups are an essential part of the professional culture of the school and have created the expectation of reflection and collaboration within the faculty on instructional strategies and student learning. (self-study, teachers, principal)

Technology is frequently integrated into and supportive of teaching and learning. All teachers use technology in their instruction in some way. Teachers have access to technology for classroom instruction, but its scope of use throughout the school to support instruction and learning is more consistent in some areas than others. Eighty-eight percent of staff members reports using technology in the classroom. All classes have computers in the classroom, and most have an LCD projector. There are 39 SMARTBoards in classrooms, and there is consistent and frequent use of these SMARTBoards in math classrooms. The school has three laptop carts, each with 24 computers with wireless Internet access. The sign-up sheets indicate that they are a highly used and sought after resource. Students note that many teachers have websites that are helpful in checking class assignments. There are numerous examples of assignments requiring the use of technology, including the creation of PowerPoint presentations, responding to and writing class blogs, making video and audio presentations, and the use of web-based research. Additionally, many textbooks are available online. There are many technology resources available to teachers that are not used because there has not been adequate training on effective classroom use, such as some of the SMARTBoards in classrooms outside of the math department. The math and science departments, because of department initiatives and leadership, have incorporated more instructional use of technology than other departments. Additionally, some classes, like Business and Technology I and II, fully incorporate technology into the classroom instruction. Available technology supports student instruction, but there must be increased school-wide technology training and coordination to support growth in technology-supported instructional strategies. (teachers, school tour, classroom observations, student work, shadowing)

The school's professional development plan offers excellent but limited opportunities for teachers to develop and improve their instructional strategies. The school has a well thought-out professional development plan that focuses almost exclusively on different aspects of differentiated instruction. The school district has developed a five-year professional development action plan for the high school, mapping out the school's professional development and in-service activities for 2007-2012. This plan focuses on implementing differentiated instruction, which is one of the central focuses of the high school. The plan includes all administrative levels of the district and high school and all faculty members. Years one and two focused on assessing school and district readiness for DI and developing

implementation strategies at the building leadership level. Years two through five focus on building teacher capacity, monitoring progress, and providing feedback to teachers. It is clear from in-service and professional development schedules that teachers received numerous and varied opportunities for DI development, including workshops, speakers, and paid summer work time to collaborate with colleagues and implement new strategies. Surveys and exit cards have provided the principal has solicited faculty member input on needs so that. Sixty-nine percent of staff members feel that professional development is based on instructional needs. Some staff members feel that the focus on DI has detracted from faculty professional development needs, most notably in the area of technology and technology use in the classroom. The professional development's strong focus on DI thus improves instructional strategies but has limited the scope of opportunities that are available to teachers. (teachers, principal, self study)

The teacher supervision and evaluation process is in a state of transition. Currently, there is minimal administrator feedback for teachers for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs. The district teacher evaluation model is reviewed and evaluated by a teacher evaluation leadership team (TEL-T). This team is made up of representative teachers and administrators from all schools in the district. In 2007-2008, in order to develop a more research-based teacher evaluation model, a subcommittee was formed to recommend changes or replacement of the old model. This process included a staff survey to address needs and desires, meeting with an expert in research-based evaluation, and reviewing other district's models. The TEL-T subcommittee adopted a model that is based on aspects of this research and Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Last year, a small group of 22 teachers piloted the new program. The new program is being fully implemented this school year, but it is not yet possible to determine its effectiveness. Until the new supervision and evaluation model is implemented for all faculty members, it will not be fully effective for the purposes of enhancing student learning and meeting student needs. (teachers, principal, self-study)

Commendations

1. The dedication of teachers to personalizing instruction for all students
2. The effective use of differentiated instruction in assignments
3. The meaningful instructional practices, student engagement, and application of knowledge and skills
4. The integrated instruction in the Green House curriculum
5. The culture of collaboration and support in the faculty
6. The teacher's content area expertise
7. The Collaborative Work Groups focus on current research and best practices
8. The availability of technology for instructional use
9. The structure and extensive professional development in support of differentiated instruction

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a plan to increase consistency in the use of school-wide rubrics in instruction
2. Develop and implement a process to evaluate the extent of use and effectiveness of differentiated instruction in classes
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure that all students are engaged in higher order thinking in all courses

4. Develop and implement a school-wide program to support technology use for classroom instruction
5. Expand opportunities for professional development in varying strategies for instruction
6. Provide formal opportunities for students and parents to give teachers feedback as a means of improving instruction
7. Ensure discussion of instructional strategies is a part of the professional culture of the school

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARD

4

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Its purpose is to inform students regarding their learning progress and teachers regarding ways to adjust the curriculum and instruction to respond effectively to the learning needs of students. Further, it communicates to the school community the progress of students in achieving the school's expectations for student learning and course-specific learning goals. Assessment results must be continually discussed to improve curriculum and instruction.

1. The school shall have a process to assess school-wide and individual student progress in achieving the academic expectations in the mission based on school-wide rubrics.
2. The school's professional staff shall use data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations.
3. For each learning activity teachers shall clarify to students the relevant school-wide academic expectations and course-specific learning goals that will be assessed.
4. Teachers shall base classroom assessment of student learning on school-wide and course-specific rubrics.
5. Teachers shall use varied assessment strategies to determine student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time.
6. Teachers shall meet collaboratively to discuss and share student work and the results of student assessments for the purposes of revising the curriculum and improving instructional strategies.
7. The school's professional development program shall provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies.
8. The school's professional staff shall communicate:
 - individual student progress in achieving school-wide academic expectations to students and their families;
 - the school's progress achieving all school-wide expectations to the school community.

Conclusions

Colchester High School (CHS) has begun a process to assess individual student progress in achieving the Essential Expectations (EEs). CHS has not implemented a formal process to assess whole school progress in achieving the EEs based on school-wide rubrics. Summative assessments such as projects, portfolios, and lab reports consistently use rubrics with language from the EEs as part of the evaluation process, however, and teachers are allowed flexibility in how they design rubrics they use on summative assessments. They are encouraged to specifically indicate which descriptors are being assessed from the EEs. Many of the rubrics are specifically connected to course content outcomes first and then reference descriptors from the EEs. Students are familiar with the EEs and their descriptors and how these are used to assess student work in classes using a variety of summative assessments. Examples of grading criteria attached to student work clearly show information about how the grade will be determined in language that often references the descriptors. There is no current formal process for assessing the degree to which the school has achieved the EEs. The faculty is researching methods and a process for collecting and reporting the information to be able to discuss how to improve curriculum and instruction. The lack of school-wide data prevents the school from knowing how useful the EEs have been proven to be, how well they are being met, or the degree to which the school is accomplishing its mission. (teachers, students, self-study, student work)

There is some data that is used to assess individual success in achieving civic and social expectations; however that the faculty does not use the data to assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations. Teaching advisories, athletics, senior seminar, Civics, and 10th grade Humanities incorporate civic and social expectations. All graduates have passed the civics requirement for the senior seminar course which informally addresses the civic and social expectations. Teacher Advisories (TAs) and athletics are clearly committed to service learning projects, and although these activities are not formally assessed, they are based on the rubrics and the language in the EEs. Teachers are working toward agreement on the content of social and civic expectations. Some staff members have suggested that habits of learning descriptors serve as the foundation of civic and social expectations. Some use this as a basis for a student participation grade. Documents for assessing participation vary in the degree to which they assess the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations, however there are teachers who report that their daily grades for participation are based on the habits of learning rubrics. Most teachers believe social and civic expectations are best targeted in the senior seminar although there is a unit in the 10th grade Humanities class that explores what it means to be civically-minded. While some data are being gathered, until a clear process is identified to collect and formally assess data regarding civic and social expectations, the school will not be able to assess or to fulfill its mission. (observations, student work, meetings with teachers, teacher interviews)

CHS teachers clearly articulate to students the relevant course-specific learning goals that will be assessed and consistently reference the appropriate descriptors from the EEs that relate to the activity. "Know, Understand, Do" units (KUDs) accompany curriculum for each course in the red notebooks and on the shared drive which identifies course-specific, academic learning goals. Directions given to students for various learning activities also include which course-specific learning goals are being measured, and some activities specifically reference descriptors from the EEs. CHS students are aware of how classroom assignments and assessments are related to the course-specific expectations. Teachers connect school-wide EEs to learning activities although students are not always aware of how this relates to the grading criteria for summative assessments. Continued and expanded clarification of the EEs and course-specific goals and as how these expectations are assessed will ensure further discussion leading to improvements in curriculum and instruction. (Endicott Survey, self-study, student shadowing, student work)

Teachers consistently base classroom assessments on course-specific rubrics. School-wide use of rubrics to assess student work varies within departments. All teachers include course-specific grading criteria that are given with their summative assessments. In addition, some teachers are using the descriptors from the EEs in their original form, while others are adapting them. Teachers report that

they have a choice in how they create and use the scoring tools. The expectation is that all teachers will make an effort to include descriptors from the EEs in these tools as they apply to summative assessments. Summative assessments in courses are 80% common within some departments. Teachers in the Green House, grades 9 and 10, have more common planning time and offer more common assessments as a result. Teachers in the Blue House, grades 11 and 12, work individually in many cases, and there is less consistency in summative assessments. Science teachers have collaborated, and all use the same rubric for assessing lab reports; humanities teachers are using a common rubric for assessing writing. Thus, there must be more consistency in common assessments based on school-wide and course-specific rubrics to provide data that teachers can use to improve curriculum and instruction. (self-study, teachers, student work, student shadowing)

Teachers use varied assessment strategies for determining student knowledge, skills, and competencies and to assess student growth over time. CHS faculty members use best practices, many of which fall under the umbrella of differentiated instruction (DI). A variety of formative assessments is used daily in classes, such as seven-minute writes, exit cards, problem-solving practice, and class discussions. Summative assessments are student-centered and frequently take student choice and learning-style into consideration. Teachers guide students into making appropriately challenging assessment choices, some of which include higher order thinking skills. The main focus of most teachers is on developing a wide range of summative opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. Many teachers offer choice at a variety of levels and a variety of formats to best meet the needs of individual learners. Support personnel are instrumental in ensuring that all students have the knowledge, skills, and competencies to meet the requirements of the assessments. Students have more choice in the Green House about how they present what they have learned while only some assignments in the Blue House offer choice. Due to the nature of advanced and AP classes, the variety of assessments is limited by the specific content of those courses and need to prepare students for the format of the external AP exams. Use of formative assessment ensures that students are developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to be successful on summative assessments. The wide variety of options in summative assessments continues the school's efforts to personalize student learning experiences and is a vehicle by which teachers use assessment results to continue to improve curriculum and instruction. (student work, student shadowing, self-study, teachers)

Teachers meet collaboratively on a regular basis to discuss and share student work and the results of student assessments for the purposes of revising the curriculum and improving instructional strategies. Collaborative Work Groups (CWGs) are a powerful tool through which teachers focus on assessment. These groups meet one to two times per month on average, and teachers decide the focus of the group under the umbrella of an administrative direction. Pre-assessments are used in various classes; there is a common rubric for assessing lab reports in science classes; and choice in project-based assessments across departments shows that teachers are committed to revising their practices to positively impact student learning. The current focus of formative assessment allows the teacher-chosen CWGs to use student work and assessment as a means of ensuring that all students are being assessed in a challenging and relevant way. The CWGs provide the time needed for faculty members to develop appropriate assessments. Common planning time for humanities teachers in the Green House allows teachers the opportunity to work together on a regular basis. As many teachers in the Blue House teach singleton courses, common planning time is not as regular and these teachers do not have as much opportunity to share and discuss work as a means to improving instruction and assessment. CHS staff needs to meet collaboratively in a variety of ways, but until there are formal opportunities for all teachers it will not be ensured that all students will have access to courses in which curriculum is regularly revised and instructional strategies are continually improved. (teachers, meetings with teachers, administrators, Endicott Survey, team leaders)

The school's professional development program provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate in developing a broad range of student assessment strategies. The school's focus on DI and formal training sessions in DI for all staff members ensure that development and use of summative assessment allows students to demonstrate mastery in a manner that is most appropriate for them. The faculty frequently uses its DI training as time to continue their work in offering the curriculum in a way that is accessible to all students. The committed focus of the school to DI also gives teachers the ability to gently push the students into working towards increasingly more challenging work while building a foundation of

success. Professional development allows teachers to collaborate to create a broad range of assessments that are used to improve curriculum and instruction. (teachers, assessment standard committee, administrators, team leaders)

There is no communication to students and their families, and the school community about the school's progress in achieving the EEs because there is no formal process for collecting or disseminating this data. Current reporting practices with quarterly interim reports and report cards use only traditional grades that are not able to reflect individual progress in achieving the EEs. Most assessments outline the course-specific details regarding how students will be graded. Parents comment that they understand how their child is being assessed on the essential expectations. The four core EEs are posted in many locations within the school and in a variety of documents that are made available to students and the public. Posters and paintings displayed in the building are limited to core words only. The results of NECAP assessment are conveyed to the school community, however at this time, there is no assessment data to report specifically related to the EEs. The school community is not aware of individual student progress nor of the school's progress in achieving the school's EEs, reducing community understanding of the value and purpose of the expectations and limiting the school's ability to continually improve curriculum and instruction. (administrators, team leaders, Endicott Survey, parents)

Commendations

1. The strong commitment to differentiated instruction using a wide variety of assessments that allow student choice in process, product, learning style, and readiness
2. The commitment of the staff to incorporate EE descriptors within various assessments
3. The consistent, across the board commitment by all faculty and staff members to participating fully in Collaborative Work Groups on needs for improving assessment practices
4. The teacher commitment to using varied assessment strategies that allow students to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and competencies to the best of their ability
5. The scheduling of formal time for teachers to work collaboratively to discuss and share student assessment for the purpose of improving curriculum and instruction

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a process for measuring and assessing individual student achievement in all Essential Expectations, using school-wide rubrics
2. Collect, aggregate and clearly communicate data on the assessed EEs to all students and their families as well as members of the school community
3. Ensure students know how school-wide academic expectation are being assessed and the relationships, if any, to course grade
4. Ensure that all students who complete the same course have common assessment experiences
5. Develop a process to collect measurable data to determine the success of the school in achieving its civic and social expectations
6. Develop a process to ensure assessments regularly incorporate higher order thinking skills

SUPPORT STANDARDS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

SUPPORT STANDARD

5

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

The way in which a school organizes learning for students, fosters leadership, and engages its members has a profound effect on teaching and learning. The professional culture of the school must be characterized by thoughtful, reflective, and constructive discourse about decision-making and practices which supports student learning and well-being.

1. The school board and superintendent shall ensure that the principal has sufficient autonomy and decision-making authority to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning.
2. The principal shall provide leadership in the school community by creating and maintaining a shared vision, direction, and focus for student learning.
3. Teachers as well as administrators other than the principal shall provide leadership essential to the improvement of the school.
4. The organization of the school and its educational programs shall promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
5. Student grouping patterns shall reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, reflect current research and best practices, and support the achievement of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
6. The schedule shall be driven by the school's mission and expectations for student learning and shall support the effective implementation of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
7. Meaningful roles in the decision-making process shall be accorded to students, parents, and all members of the school staff to promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership.
8. Each teacher shall have a student load that enables the teacher to meet the learning needs of individual students.
9. There shall be a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor who personalizes each student's educational experience, knows the student well, and assists the student in achieving the school-wide expectations for student learning.
10. The professional staff shall collaborate within and across departments in support of learning for all students.
11. All school staff shall be involved in promoting the well-being and learning of students.
12. Student success shall be regularly acknowledged, celebrated, and displayed.
13. The climate of the school shall be safe, positive, respectful, and supportive, resulting in a sense of pride and ownership.
14. The school board shall support the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning.

Conclusions

The principal of Colchester High School (CHS) has sufficient autonomy and authority in most aspects of the leadership of the building. The board and superintendent work with the principal in three main ways: budget, policy, and evaluation and supervision. In each, the principal is given direction for achieving relevant goals and is then allowed to guide the school and faculty as she deems best. The superintendent has fully supported the principal's vision for CHS as well as the annual action plan developed at the team leader retreat. In regard to the budget, the superintendent and board are willing to hear the principal's recommendations related to budget reductions; however, they ultimately make final decisions based on the competing overall district needs. The principal has also experienced less autonomy when determining school-wide professional development and annual school goals. In years past, the building principal had a substantial amount of funds to devote to professional development and summer curriculum work. As a result of diminished resources, the central office administration now allocates the funds related to support the principal's interests in professional development and some programs. The principal has restructured the leadership team based on her assessment of a current need. Following the budget cuts, she exercised creative staffing in order to maintain programs she identified as being critical. The principal identifies themes on which Collaborative Work Groups (CWGs) will focus for the year. The principal reports that she has increased autonomy in determining in-service professional development content. The superintendent, principal, community members, and staff members agree that there is insufficient constructive discourse regarding educational community priorities including professional development and the budget. As a result of consistent autonomous leadership by the principal, however, within the school, there is a clear direction among the faculty and staff. When the superintendent, principal, and faculty and community members are able to engage in constructive discourse, the school will be able to fully achieve the mission and expectations for student learning. (school board, teachers, central office administrators, principal)

The principal's effective leadership in the school community has created and maintained a shared vision, direction and focus for student learning. The leadership team is composed of six team leaders from all disciplines within the building along with other administrators who come together weekly to discuss issues, plan the direction of the school, make decisions based on school-wide input, and implement those decisions. The principal supported the work on differentiated instruction and the creation of the Essential Expectations. The staff shares her vision of CWG with a focus on formative assessment. There was restructuring of the administrative team to oversee support services so that all departments communicate directly with a specified teacher leader. The shared vision, direction, and focus result in an efficient professional culture characterized by practices that support student learning. (teachers, organization committee, administrators, Endicott Survey)

At Colchester High School, teachers and administrators other than the principal provide significant leadership essential to the improvement of the school. Teachers and other administrators are involved in the decision-making process. The existence of the leadership team has made a positive impact on the creation and implementation of school-wide initiatives. The assistant principals provide leadership in the area of student behavior. The teacher advisory committee and team leaders have an essential role in providing leadership for their particular content areas throughout the school. Teachers facilitate in-service meetings and professional development on differentiated instructions. Their roles and responsibilities include but are not limited to creating the master schedule, Collaborative Work Groups, disseminating information, and providing professional development to their peers. There is a shared ownership and responsibility for decisions which fosters leadership and engages all faculty members in a collaborative and professional culture. (teachers, student work, administrators, Endicott Survey)

The organization of Colchester High School and the educational programs promote the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The school is organized into subject area departments. The faculty has formed collaborative work groups meeting twice a month as well as during school-based in-service days. These groups have created the essential learning expectations and currently collaborate on formative assessments and differentiated instruction. The school's structure helps personalize learning

by dividing the school into two houses. The Green House encompasses ninth and tenth grade students and focuses on the core academic courses. This provides a more structured environment and supports the development of academic proficiency. Academic proficiency is demonstrated through successful completion of core academic classes as students progress through the Green House. The Blue House encompasses eleventh and twelfth grade students and supports more individual choice in their learning program. Students must complete a senior seminar project which has a required component of community based/service learning. The school structure, professional collaboration, and purposeful revision of the essential learning expectations has an on-going, positive impact on the educational programs and the school's mission and expectations for student learning. (students, teachers program of studies, student shadowing)

Student grouping patterns reflect the diversity of the student body, foster heterogeneity, reflect current research and best practices, and support the achievement of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. In the 9th and 10th grade core classes and in the 11th grade humanities all classes are heterogeneously grouped. All incoming 9th grade students are assessed with a common writing rubric. The exception to this includes 9th grade students who are enrolled in geometry or may have chosen to double up with science classes. In 10th grade, all core classes are heterogeneously grouped with the exception being math students enrolled in Algebra II or Algebra/Trig and the few students who have enrolled in Experimental Chemistry. In 11th grade, all humanities classes are heterogeneously grouped with the exception of the students enrolled in the Advanced Placement (AP) classes. Blue House courses, grades 11 and 12, are leveled but available to all students. By their nature, some classes such as AP offerings tend to be less heterogeneously grouped based on student interest and prerequisite knowledge necessary to access the curriculum. Most elective courses, (i.e. physical education, world language, business, art, music) support enrollment of heterogeneously-grouped students from grades 9 through 12. The teacher advisory program is grouped heterogeneously. This program includes all students who are assigned to a teacher throughout their 4 years of high school. The school's inclusive grouping patterns supports student learning and well-being. (self-study, teachers, guidance counselor, director of student support services, classroom observations, student shadowing)

The school's master schedule, an alternating A/B block, supports the school's mission and expectations for student learning and effective implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Block scheduling facilitates differentiated instruction, allowing the faculty to meet the individual needs of students and promote integrated learning. The team-taught humanities classes in the Green House are examples of how the schedule allows for integrated individualized learning opportunities for students. These longer blocks of time allow in-depth project-based learning that support students' progress towards essential expectations. Students are afforded meaningful and engaging activities within the class time. These opportunities include physical education classes that include off-campus experiences (canoeing, mountain biking), science class labs, co/team-teaching in the humanities, internships in the upper-level grades, and the extended meeting times for the Thursday morning advisory program. This allows for school-wide advisory activities and initiatives as well as the guidance office meeting grade-level specific student needs. The master schedule creates opportunities for teachers to collaborate and also gives a majority of student access to all the courses offered. The inclusive schedule engages students in their learning and has a profound effect on curriculum and instruction, supporting best practices. (students, teachers, student work, class observations)

Students, parents, and the members of the school staff share meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote an atmosphere of participation, responsibility, and ownership. Teachers are accorded opportunities to participate in the decision-making process through communication with team leaders and the leadership team on all matters that impact the teaching and learning within the school. The CWG, team meetings, department meetings, faculty meetings, and committee meetings provide these decision-making opportunities on a school-wide basis. The students participate in the decision-making process through the student government which has a non-voting representative on the school board. This student shares pertinent information between the school board and the student body. Students in the civics class are required to attend school board meetings. Parents receive many invitations to be involved with the decision-making process that takes place district-wide. Parental participation is visible in policy work, specifically truancy, discipline, and class size. Parents participate in the hiring and interview process of school-wide employees. The shared decision-making process

amongst the school community creates a shared sense of responsibility and ownership that supports student learning. (students, parents, Endicott Survey)

Overall, teachers have a student load that allows them to meet the individual needs of students. Typically, class sizes range from 17-24 students. There are a few courses where student enrollment is as high as 26-29 students. In these classes, teachers have stated it is challenging to meet the needs of all students. Prior to course enrollment every year, administrators and team leaders meet to determine class size based on individual courses and departmental needs. Every effort is made to respect the maximum class size limits. Seventy percent of staff members agrees that the student load enables them to meet the needs of individual learners. Teachers implement differentiated instruction continually which provides diverse learning opportunities for students. Team teaching of classes in the Green House humanities has helped to alleviate the increase in class size. Adhering to limits on class size affects teaching and learning and enables teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. (teachers, self-study, classroom observations)

The school has an ongoing formal teacher advisory program that seeks to establish a connection between students and another adult member of the school community in addition to the school guidance counselor, but some students still have not made that connection. The teacher advisory system allows for students to connect with the same adult member throughout their four-year high school experience. Each advisory varies from 8-14 students and is organized by grade level. The advisory program has been revised for the 2010 -2011 school year. Monday advisory meetings are more informal, disseminating information to students in preparation for Thursday's advisory activity and completing numerous administrative tasks. Thursday advisory meetings are more formal with a purposeful focus that engages students in a school-wide activity or a specific grade level need. There is a planned curriculum, and set activities are determined and prepared by the newly formed teacher advisory committee. In addition to the teacher advisory program students access other adult members of the school community on an as-needed basis. These examples include but are not limited to the writing workshop, the math lab, homework club, extra-curricular activities, special education programs, social workers, and the substance abuse prevention counselor. The advisory program and additional academic supports for students foster connections and provides all students the opportunity to make connections with an adult who can assist students in achieving the learning expectations in the mission. In spite of these opportunities almost thirty percent of the students surveyed felt as though they do not have a strong connection to an adult in the building. The school provides a variety of opportunities that support and personalize the educational experience for students and foster a culture of support which impacts student learning and creates a sense of community. Until all students feel this connection, however, the school will not achieve the goals in its mission. (self-study, teachers, students)

The professional staff at Colchester High has a high level of collaboration within their respective departments, teaming within the humanities and, collaborating, but they are challenged to formally collaborate across departments. Teachers do collaborate within departments. Teachers share common planning time in some content areas. There is formal and consistent collaboration among the humanities teachers and those in CWGs. During these formal meeting times, teachers focus on planning, curriculum, instruction, best practices, and assessments for classes. Special educators regularly communicate with the classroom teachers and instructional assistants to support students with identified needs for learning. In addition to the formal meetings that take place on a weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly basis, there are also informal examples of collaboration such as the "shared drive" which teachers use to develop and share curricular activities and rubrics. Teacher access to formal interdepartmental collaboration will encourage the opportunities for students and teachers to participate in interdisciplinary authentic assessments. (teachers, self-study, meetings with teachers)

All faculty and staff members support the students' well-being and learning. At Colchester High School, every employee contributes to supporting the well-being of students. The guidance office is a place students can find emotional and behavioral support. School nurses are available all day to address student health issues; they also take a proactive role in student health awareness. The food service staff is conscientious in efforts to provide nutritious and well-balanced meals. The custodial staff takes pride creating a clean, welcoming environment for students. Teachers make themselves available to students before, during, and after school. CHS utilizes instructional assistants in many classes and there are a

many supports available to students outside the classroom, including the writers workshop, the math lab, and homework club. A prime example of the school's concern has been the modifications made to teacher assignments and study halls to keep the writer's workshop open for students. Students can access emotional and behavioral supports in a number of different places in the school. The planning room provides behavioral support and intervention for students who are having difficulty performing in the academic setting. The substance-abuse-prevention (SAP) counselor is available for help with resources and referral for all students and provides substance abuse education through the TA program. The school has two school-based clinicians (social workers) in the building regularly to provide support for students on a referral basis. Efforts that promote the well-being of students provide a supportive culture for the learning of Colchester High School students. (self-study, teachers, classroom observations)

Student achievements and examples of work are clearly visible within and throughout the school and classrooms. Student success is regularly acknowledged and celebrated. There are numerous celebrations that take place during the school year that acknowledge students' successes in a variety of disciplines. Some examples are senior seminar, science essential topic night, the art show, National Honor Society induction night, community service projects, class night, poetry, press releases, CHS Heritage Night for the American Experience classes, student of the month luncheons (which are supported by the community), athletic awards, and specific discipline recognitions. These acknowledgements honor students' hard work in areas ranging from academic subjects to community service, performing arts, and co-curricular achievements. A large majority of faculty members regularly acknowledges and celebrates student success, and student work is displayed in most classrooms as well as in display cases around the school. There is student recognition on the daily announcements, posted on the school's web site, and displayed in the cafeteria on the scrolling message board. Celebrating student success instills pride and honor and has a profound effect on engagement and learning. This is a prevalent part of the culture of the school. (students, Endicott Survey, student work, classroom observations)

Teacher and student relationships at Colchester High School demonstrate a climate within the school that is safe, positive, respectful, and supportive and results in a sense of pride and ownership. School safety has been a priority for this school. There are security cameras installed outside and within the hallways and cafeteria, the doors are locked throughout the day, and there is a school resource officer on campus daily. Parents state they are satisfied with the safety of the school and the supportive environment. There have been recent upgrades with lighting in the parking lot as well as the athletic fields. Students feel a true sense that teachers want them to succeed based on their mutual relationships and consistent communication. Smart Start is one example of how the faculty of Colchester High School begins their positive relationships with their incoming freshmen students. CHS is in the process of revising the teacher advisory program, and it is committed to developing relationships with students. The advisory program promotes community-service projects such as the Thanksgiving food drive and other school-wide activities that engage students in social and civic responsibilities. There is a large population of the student body that is involved with co-curricular activities. The CHS climate demonstrates a sense of pride and ownership which has a profound effect on engagement, student learning and well-being. (students, classroom observations, teachers, parents)

The school board supports the implementation of the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The board's formal policy manuals and communications create the basis for decision making at CHS, and its members work with the CHS principal on action plans and a budget to support the school's mission and expectations. The board advocates for learning opportunities while at the same time balancing fiscal responsibilities. Its members continue to communicate with the wider community and celebrate staff and student achievements. Board members have frequently sought out student and parent input and have maintained a cordial and professional relationship with the CHS staff. The school board also regularly attends events, or student demonstrations of learning such as Trash on the Lawn Days, forensics meets, debate meets, math league competitions, CHS Senior Seminar Civics Demonstration Nights, and the CHS Essential Topics Demonstrations Nights. Additionally, the board regularly asks the principal for reports on student learning and considers current data when creating action plans and making decisions. The connections between the school board and the school support student learning and well-being. (school board, self-study, teachers administrators)

Commendations

1. The autonomy afforded to the principal to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning
2. The collaborative leadership within the school
3. The faculty commitment to differentiated instruction and formative assessments
4. The school's commitment to heterogeneity
5. The schedule's multiple opportunities for enhancing student learning
6. The shared distribution of ownership in the decision-making processes
7. The commitment of the school to the teacher advisory program
8. The effective collaboration within their department/content areas
9. The focus of all faculty and staff members on students' well-being and learning
10. The frequent acknowledgement and celebration of student achievements
11. The positive and supportive relationships among students, teachers, and parents that demonstrate a sense of pride and ownership within the CHS community

Recommendations

1. Define a shared statement of beliefs between the school board, superintendent, and principal which can guide the decision-making process to ensure the principal's continued ability to lead the school in achieving the mission and expectations for student learning
2. Review and evaluate the current schedule to determine if there are ways the schedule could be revised to further enhance the attainment of the mission
3. Investigate and implement additional methods to involve parents and students in meaningful roles in the school's decision-making process
4. Review, develop, and implement plans to increase student connections through the teacher advisory
5. Increase collaboration across departments in support of learning for all students

6

SUPPORT STANDARD

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Student learning and well-being are dependent upon adequate and appropriate support programs and services. The school is responsible for providing an effective range of integrated resources to enhance and improve student learning and well-being and to support the school's mission and expectations.

All Student Support Services

1. The school's student support services shall be consistent with the school's mission and expectations for student learning.
2. The school shall allocate resources, programs, and services so that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning.
3. Student support personnel shall enhance student learning by interacting and working cooperatively with professional and other staff and by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students.
4. All student support services shall be regularly evaluated and revised to support improved student learning.
5. There shall be a system for effective and ongoing communication with students, parents/guardians, and school personnel, designed to keep them informed about the types of available student support services and identified student needs.

6. Student records, including health and immunization records, shall be maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law.
7. There shall be sufficient certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library media services.

Guidance Services

8. The school shall provide a full range of comprehensive guidance services, including:
 - individual and group meetings with counseling personnel;
 - personal, career, and college counseling;
 - student course selection assistance;
 - collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers;
 - appropriate support in the delivery of special education services for students.

Health Services

9. The school's health services shall provide:
 - preventive health services and direct intervention services;
 - appropriate referrals;
 - mandated services;
 - emergency response mechanisms;
 - ongoing student health assessments.

6

SUPPORT STANDARD

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Library Information Services

10. The library/information services program and materials shall be fully integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional program.
11. Library/information services personnel shall be knowledgeable about the curriculum and support its implementation.
12. A wide range of materials, technologies, and other library/information services that are responsive to the school's student population shall be available to students and faculty and utilized to improve teaching and learning.
13. Students, faculty, and support staff shall have regular and frequent access to library/information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experience before, during, and after the school day.
14. The library/information services program shall foster independent inquiry by enabling students and faculty to use various school and community information resources and technologies.
15. Policies shall be in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet.

Special Education Services

16. The school shall provide special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws.

Conclusions

Student support services at Colchester High School meet the students' needs and the goals expressed in the school's mission and expectations for student learning. The school meets these needs by offering a variety of programs designed to support both student achievement and student well-being. The guidance department meets the needs of the academic, personal, social, and emotional needs of the students through individual meetings; collaboration with teachers, staff, and administrators; effective communication with parents; referrals of students to outside community agencies; student access to alternative forms of education as needed; and assistance with post high school planning. The district nursing supervisor is a member of the educational support team (EST) committee, school crisis team, and attends all child protection team meetings, and ensures students have received eyesight screening. The health services at Colchester High School work in conjunction with the school athletic trainer, to help reduce the number of sports related concussions by using a pre-concussion screening of all athletes using a program called Headminder. Students with a diverse range of needs are served through special education programs through the use of individualized educational plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans. The library and media services assist individual students with meeting the reading and writing components of the Essential Expectations (EE). As a result of these support services, students are prepared for the challenges of reaching their own academic, civic, and social potential, and the school can enhance and improve student learning and well-being. (support staff, teachers, students, self-study, parents)

Colchester High School thoughtfully allocates resources, programs, and services so all students have an equal opportunity to achieve the school's expectations for student learning. CHS offers a wide range of opportunities for all students, ranging from individualized outcomes based on the Vermont standards to dual enrollment in college classes. CHS offers help with problem-solving; provides students the opportunity to take Virtual High School online classes (VHS), Advanced Placement classes (AP), individualized diploma programs through Target Graduation, Colchester Alternative Program (CAP), alternative senior year, Vermont Adult Learning, Recycle North's Career Start Program, and Northland's Job Center. CHS also offers help with learning skills and habits; writer's workshop, math center, and reading lab, a homework club everyday for student academic assistance, and English Language Learners (ELL) classes which focus on improving English language proficiency in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening by providing push-in and push-out in support, on-going assessment, and teacher and instructional aide support. There is a planning room which is available for students to process their inappropriate behaviors with a licensed social worker while continuing their assignments at hand. The special education program offers life skills, resource classes, instructional aide support, consulting programs, a Crossroads program, inclusive and mainstream support for all individual education plan (IEP) and 504 students. CHS has implemented teacher-advisory (TA) with every student twice a week fostering a connection for teachers and student relationships. During TA students are highly encouraged to participate in community service and volunteerism. The guidance department connects with the students at this time via career and personal surveys, and students are informed on a more personal level regarding PSAT sign-ups, college visit information, and other such needs. According to the Endicott Survey, 83.7% of the students at CHS feels comfortable asking for help with their academics. As a result of the varied support programs, access to the community service opportunities, and various available civic and social clubs, students are better able to achieve the school's mission and learning expectations. (support staff, teachers, students, self-study)

Student support personnel are clearly committed to enhancing student learning by interacting collaboratively with professional and staff members by utilizing community resources to address the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of students. Guidance counselors collaborate with teachers on a continuous basis to ensure that students are receiving the support they need regarding a range of academic, social, personal, and emotional needs. Twice a month, counselors have educational support team meetings which enable the teachers and counselors to brainstorm ideas to help support the struggling student. Counselors work with local colleges and Virtual High School to help enhance a student's academic challenge by creating a dual enrollment program designed specifically for that student's need. They also support students and families through the college admissions application process. There is a strong connection between student support services and outside community resources for emergency and ongoing mental health needs. Some outside agencies that CHS collaborates with are

Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF), Youthbuild, Centerpoint, Vermont Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the Howard Center. The school's nurse continually partners with families, athletic trainers, and physicians to ensure all students are receiving the necessary health care required to meet required accommodations. The library partners with Colchester's Public Library to promote learning opportunities for all students. The CHS Special Education consulting program is designed to have special education educators and regular educators working together to meet the needs of the special education students. Instructional aides not only assist with the special education population but with the regular education students while in mainstreamed classes. The special education department circulates weekly progress reports for teachers to complete in order for case managers to track student academic progress on a regular basis. CHS has an employment specialist who helps partner connections throughout the community to help special education students find internships and jobs. The extensive collaboration between student support staff and faculty members, as well as with outside community agencies enhances student learning and provides the invaluable services of ensuring the well-being of all students at CHS. (support staff, teachers, students, self-study)

Student support services lack a formal method to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and make revisions to support improved student learning. While there is no formal means of assessing the effectiveness of student support services, guidance counselors, nurses, library and media staff, and special education staff members do use some sources of feedback for evaluating their performances in school. Counselors meet weekly to plan, evaluate, and discuss service delivery and best practices while sharing information on resources including electronic transcripts and scholarships. They also meet bi-weekly with the director of student services. Counselors use PowerSchool which allows them to track interactions with students and provide college assistance. After each parent outreach night, counselors collect exit cards as an evaluation of the effectiveness of the presentation. The health office maintains a daily log of student visits and services provided. An end of the year report is completed in June, for the principal and the superintendent reviewing all health service activities, screening numbers, and crisis prevention team's interventions. The library maintains a log of student, tutoring group, and class visits to the library. This is used to run frequent reports and analyze collection and patron use. Each year, the librarian requests input from teachers and staff members when making additions to the collection. The library staff also conducts informal assessments of students and staff members regarding material and services on an ongoing basis. The director of student support services is a member of CORE, which is a district team that meets weekly to evaluate district-wide special education service delivery. In addition, special educators meet bi-weekly with the director of student support services. While the informal evaluations taking place are useful, a more formal approach is necessary to improve the systematic delivery of services to students and enable the system to respond to specific support needs. (support staff, teachers, self-study)

Student support personnel use several effective means of communication with students, faculty members, and parents/guardians about available student support services. The Laker View that is available to all Colchester families is the school newsletter that is distributed by mail, e-mail, and the CHS website. The Laker View includes articles by support services personnel as well as a calendar of events highlighting support services outreach events. Families start receiving the Laker View school newsletter starting in December of eighth grade year for families to start learning about what is offered at the high school and for an easier transition for students and families. In addition to the Laker View, the CHS website also provides students and families the school's daily announcements, yearbook information, links to teacher websites, library information resources, and calendars which include all CHS activities with times and locations. The guidance department sponsors a variety of programs for parents/guardians including an 8th grade orientation program called Smart Start, financial aide night for parents, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) Night, college awareness, etc. The school also employs Alert Now to deliver messages to parents/guardians regarding programs. Guidance counselors send warning letters to the parents of students who are in danger of failing a class and set up meetings. In the self-study survey, 96.4% of parents feel they are able to meet with their child's guidance counselor if necessary. The teacher advisory (TA) program is used to provide communication to every student and gives students the opportunity to connect with at least one adult twice a week. In addition to the regular seven minute TA, CHS also has extended TA periods that last thirty, forty-five, or sixty minutes. The extended TA periods focus on a specific social emotional learning curriculum that is

tailored for specific grade levels. As a result of these various methods of communication, the community has been well informed of student support services, and the school has been successful at maintaining an effective communication system about the various types of programs. (support staff, teachers, students, self-study, Endicott Survey)

Student records, including health and immunization records, are maintained in a confidential and secure manner consistent with federal and state law. IEPs and 504s are maintained electronically on SpEdDoc, which is password protected. Each student's file within SpEdDoc is accessible by the case manager, the special education secretary, and the director of student support services. Hard copies of special education and 504 files are maintained in locked file cabinets in the special education office. Student cumulative files are maintained in locked file cabinets in the guidance office. School personnel who need access to files must sign them out with the secretary. Health records are maintained in locked file cabinets in the nurse's office. Student visitation and immunization records are stored on the computer and are not susceptible to any servers outside of the building. Library records are password protected and follow confidentiality standards. According to the self-study survey, 90% of parents trust that student health and medical information will remain confidential. All student records are safely secured and maintained in confidentiality. (self-study, district nursing supervisor, guidance, Endicott Survey)

There are adequate certified/ license personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library/media services. CHS has three full-time guidance counselors and one guidance secretary for approximately eight hundred students. This breaks down to ratio of 267:1. There is one full-time nurse assigned to the high school and one full-time district nursing supervisor who is based at the high school, providing a health services ratio of 500:1. There is one full-time librarian and one full-time librarian aide assigned to the library and media center. Special education employs eight full-time special educators and twenty-five full-time para-professionals and tutors. There is one full-time 504 case manager and one full-time 504 instructional aide. There are 1.8 full-time school services clinicians contracted through the Howard Center. There is one full-time director of student support services who oversees all support services at the high school. Additional supports at CHS include district-wide support personnel: one special education director, one full-time autism specialist, one full-time school psychologist, and one full-time occupational therapist. The ratio of all student to support staff falls within the Vermont School Quality Standard. This allows adequate certified/licensed personnel and support staff members to provide effective counseling, health, special education, and library/media services. (staff members, Endicott Survey, teachers, parents)

Guidance Counselors provide a full range of comprehensive guidance services to students including individual counseling; personal, career, and college counseling, course selection; collaborative outreach to community and area mental health agencies; and support in the delivery of special education services. According to the self-study, 71.5% of parents trusts that their child's guidance needs are met. Seventy-three percent of students agrees there are people at CHS who assist with course selection. Throughout the year, counselors meet with students of all grade levels to support them in the academic, personal, and social/emotional domains. There are individual meetings with seniors in the fall to support them in the college application process. In the spring, counselors meet with juniors as they complete the course registration process in order to review the student's progress towards graduation. Counselors meet with students in groups on average twice per month during extended TA periods. This time is primarily used to emphasize post secondary planning and course selection assistance. According to student and parents interviews as well as CHS self-study report, the counseling department does not meet regularly with underclassmen regarding career and post secondary planning before their junior year. It is noted that the counseling department is making an effort to extend the guidance plan for younger students in 9th and 10th grade regarding post secondary planning. According to the self-study, 59.7% of students' guidance counselors speak with them individually at least once or twice a year. Through collaboration with outside agencies such as DCF, Vermont Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and the Howard Center, counselors are able to meet the needs of the students effectively and efficiently if a crisis arises. According to the self-study, 89.2% of parents trusts their school's emergency response procedures. The guidance department also has well established relationships with many outside agencies and colleges to support students who need alternative means to graduation and/or enhancements to the high school curriculum. According to the 2010 CHS School Profile, 58% of seniors will attend a four-year college and 14% will attend a two-year college. The guidance department

collaborates on a weekly and daily basis with special education case managers, the 504 coordinator, instructional aides, and teachers regarding services for special education students. While guidance counselors provide a comprehensive range of guidance services, lack of regular connection to the underclassmen hinders the efficiency in meeting the needs of learning for all students. (self-study, teachers, support staff members, school profile)

Colchester High School's health services provide preventive health services and direct intervention services; appropriate referrals; mandated services; emergency response mechanisms; and ongoing student health assessments. According to the Endicott Survey, the majority of students, staff, and parents is supportive of the school's health services; 68% of all students surveyed feels comfortable going to the school nurse. Over 78% of staff surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the nurse keeps them apprised of the specific health needs of the students. Parents are especially pleased with the school's health services. Over 77% of parents surveyed trusts the school's emergency procedures, and over 89% is comfortable with the school's procedures in the event their child becomes ill. The nursing staff provides preventive health services. Currently, 9th and 12th graders are screened for vision; whereas the state has assumed the responsibility for screening hearing. The district nursing supervisor, in conjunction with the high school athletic trainer, has led the effort to reduce the number of sports-related concussions, especially to prevent second-impact syndrome, by implementing pre-concussion screening of all athletes with the Headminder program. Furthermore, the school's health services worked closely with the Vermont Department of Health to coordinate the education of the H1N1 pandemic. Information was sent home to families via the school's monthly newsletter and Alert Now automated phone system. Clinic dates were set up to vaccinate all students who wanted to receive the H1N1 vaccine. The district nursing supervisor also coordinated H1N1 presentations in all science classes. The district nursing supervisor also serves on the school crisis team, child protection team (CPT) and the Educational support team. The CPT meets whenever there is a significant issue within a student's personal life. The team meets anywhere between eighty to one hundred times annually. The district nursing supervisor is also responsible for writing medical 504 Plans. There is constant communication with the guidance department. Student visits and immunization records are stored on the computer and are not available to any servers outside of the building. Health services are adequately supplied, funded, and staffed. There are six substitutes nurses on-call in order to make certain there is always someone in health services. The health services department also has automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in all district schools. There are two AEDs located in the high school, one in the main office and one in the trainer's office. The athletic trainer takes his AED to all home athletic events. Students have access to a broad range of assistance and health services which promotes student learning. (Endicott Survey, school self study, students, district nursing supervisor)

The library/information services program and materials are only partially integrated into the Colchester High School curriculum and instructional program. The library works with the humanities department to create lessons and projects. One example is the summer reading project funded by the humanities department. Incoming sophomores receive a gift-certificate to a local book store and purchase a book of their choice. The students write a report on the project and then donate the book to the library. The librarian has also worked with the business teachers to link information literacy into the new business and technology curriculum. However, collaboration with other departments is minimal. The library is working with a limited budget and struggles to obtain contemporary resources that promote consistent library use by other departments. Although students visit the library quite regularly during study halls or after school, they rarely utilize the library and its technology for academic purposes for class assignments outside of the humanities and business and technology curriculum. In the Endicott Survey, about 30% of students agrees that the library is used often during classes. Furthermore, about 48% of the staff has not consulted the school librarian when developing and revising curriculum. Also, library literacy skills are not currently integrated into the curriculum. Collaboration between the library and departments within the school must be improved so that the library/information services are utilized to the fullest extent so that all students can enhance and improve their learning and well-being. (self-study, students, teachers, library staff, Endicott Survey)

Library/information services personnel at Colchester High School are sometimes knowledgeable about the curriculum and do attempt to support its implementation. Teachers and the librarian/media specialist communicate in order to schedule class time in the library. When the librarian and teachers meet they

discuss library projects and programs. The librarian and staff aid make resources available for classes that utilize the library. The librarian works with the humanities department to help integrate library services. The librarian facilitates the lessons with the humanities teachers as well. However, based on the school survey and teacher interviews, there is no scheduled time for the library personnel and teachers to collaborate. As a result of limited collaboration, library services are only minimally able to enhance curriculum on all areas. (Endicott Survey, self-study, library staff, teachers)

A wide range of materials, technology, and other library/information services that are responsive to the Colchester High School's student population are available to students and most faculty members but are underutilized to improve teaching and learning. The library maintains three laptop carts of twenty-four laptops each. Materials are reviewed and approved by team leaders once a year. Several electronic resources have been added to support special education, such as TumbleReadables, which provides online books. To support research, the library also provides subscriptions to online encyclopedias, ProQuest, ABC Cleo, and Vermont Online Library. The library is in the process of expanding electronic resources, but it needs a formal process that involves faculty, student, and community input to determine the types of resources needed. In the last few years, the library's staff has continuously improved relationships with students, and as a result, student request for works in fiction have tripled. Nonfiction and periodical materials have been added as well to support a wider range of reading levels and to address multiple learning styles and interests. According to the Endicott Survey, about 64% of the students agree that the school library has the materials needed. About 65% of the staff agrees that print, non-print, and technological resources are adequate in the library. However, according to the Endicott Survey, some teachers do not find the library to be fully adequate to support curriculum. While the range of materials and technology in library/media services has grown, a lack of coordinated input and communication with departments limits its effectiveness to improve teaching and learning. (self-study, Endicott Survey, library staff, teachers, students)

Students, faculty members, and support staff at Colchester High School have regular and frequent access to library/information services, facilities, and programs as an integral part of their educational experience before, during, and after the school day. The library is open Monday through Friday to students and staff members before, during, and after school. It opens at 7:15 AM and closes at 4:00 PM. Students can go to the library with classes or from a class or study hall. Many students utilize the library during their lunch period. Occasionally, the library is used for other purposes such as homework club, special class events, faculty meetings, board meetings, and school-wide testing. As a result of its wide availability, there is access to the library's resources before, during, and after the school day in order to support student learning. (self-study, library staff, teachers, students)

The library/information services program at Colchester High School plays a minimal role in fostering independent inquiry with individual students. Students at CHS are made aware of library services when the need arises. There is no formal orientation for the library to introduce the students to research skills practices or develop independent learning. Currently, the research process is taught through the business & technology curriculum. The Colchester High School Library/information Services program does enable students and faculty members to use various school and community information resources and technology. The library has eight working computers, three computers with automated catalogue, a copy machine, and an extensive book and magazine collection all available for student use. Furthermore, the inter-library loan system allows for the library's staff to borrow books from outside resources. The library allows students and faculty to use various school and community resources; however, because the school offers no formal student orientation, the fostering of student independent inquiry is hindered. (self-study, library staff, students)

Policies at Colchester High School are in place for the selection and removal of information resources and the use of technologies and the Internet. The library follows the district policy that addresses the selection and review of resources. Faculty and staff members can select and then request information resources that they feel may aid in their instruction. After writing the request, the principal evaluates the proposed resource, and approves/disapproves the request. This process is similar for both hardware and software although the selection of hardware needs a purchase order. Similarly, there is a formal process to remove information resources as well; ending with the approval of the principal; this applies to online resources and material resources as when the school decided to remove outdated encyclopedias and

donated them to the town library. The library staff continuously monitors out-of-date or little used resources. There is an Acceptable Use Policy in place for CHS students, faculty members, and staff. Students may not use Internet resources until a parent has signed off as well as the student. Because policies are in place for selection, removal, and the use of technology, library/media services can effectively manage resources to support the school's mission and expectations for learning. (self-study, teachers, library staff)

The school provides adequate special education services related to the identification, monitoring, and referral of students in accordance with local, state, and federal laws. The school has eight special educators who serve 110 students. The practice of including students in mainstream classes is done on an individual student basis. The school's variety of programs meets their needs to help best maximize learning for students with disabilities. The school uses the EST to discuss students who are referred by a parent, teacher, administrator, physician, or guidance counselor for special education evaluation. Appropriate policies and procedures are followed during the referral, evaluation, individualized education plan (IEP) development and implementation, and review process. Students with disabilities are placed in classes based on identified needs. Through a variety of specialized programs, special education students are afforded the necessary supports to meet the expectation for learning based on the needs of the student. (self-study, teachers, staff support members, parents, students)

Commendations

1. The variety of programs designed by the student support service team to meet the school's mission and expectations for student learning
2. The support services staff's dedication to meeting the diverse needs of this student population
3. The wide variety of collaboration and partnerships with community agencies
4. The extensive informal efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of student support programs
5. The effective communication between all areas of school resources for learning with other CHS staff members
6. The range of comprehensive services provided by guidance counselors
7. The Headminder, preventive-concussion program provides by health services
8. The library and media services that are available for students before, during, and after school
9. The collaboration between the public and school library
10. The opportunities provided by the special education department, Colchester Alternative Program (CAP), and CrossRoads in providing opportunities for students to achieve the academic, social, and civic expectations in the mission

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a formal evaluation process to assess and document the effectiveness of all student support services
2. Develop and implement a guidance plan to connect counselors to underclassmen to ensure efficiency in meeting the academic, career, and college counseling needs of all students
3. Integrate library/information services into the CHS curriculum and instructional program
4. Ensure teachers and the library/information staff collaboratively plan lessons and projects that relate to the curriculum and foster student independent inquiry

5. Develop and implement an orientation program which introduces the students to the library resources
6. Increase library/ media resource materials
7. Create a curriculum and formal program through which the library media specialist can teach research skills and effective use of online and network resources to all students

7

SUPPORT STANDARD

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Active community and parent participation, facilities which support school programs and services, and dependable and adequate funding are necessary for the school to achieve its mission and expectations for student learning.

1. The school shall engage parents and families as partners in each student's education and shall encourage their participation in school programs and parent support groups.
2. The school shall foster productive business/community/higher education partnerships that support student learning.
3. The school site and plant shall support and enhance all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning.
4. The physical plant and facilities shall meet all applicable federal and state laws and shall be in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations.
5. Equipment shall be adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate.
6. A planned and adequately funded program of building and site management shall ensure the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant.
7. There shall be ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements.
8. The community and the district's governing body shall ensure an adequate and dependable source of revenue to provide and maintain appropriate school programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies for student learning.
9. Faculty and building administrators shall have active involvement in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation.

Conclusions

Colchester High School engages parents and families as partners in each student's education and encourages their participation in school programs and parent support groups. The school frequently communicates with parents via the Lakeview Newsletter, school website, Colchester Sun, the school Facebook page, regular mailings, email, Alert Now and numerous forms of written correspondence and invitations to the school. Report cards, progress, and attendance reports are mailed home or emailed to parents throughout the year. Additionally, an online grading system where students and parents can check grades is planned for implementation in the future. Parents are involved with interview committees, booster clubs, co-curricular activities, Project Graduation, principal forums, and through attendance at many school functions. Parents are invited to programs that showcase student work such as science essentials topics night, senior seminars public speaking tribute speeches, and student of the month lunches. Moreover, the school connects with parents through several guidance evenings, informational programs such as senior college night, financial aid night, and eighth grade open house. Additionally, parent input is encouraged through questionnaires and surveys such as Survey Monkey. Parents are encouraged to participate in development of policy to improve student learning such as truancy, discipline, and class size concerns. However, parent participation on these policy committees has been limited. As a result of these communications, parents feel well informed about the school culture, including events and opportunities for school engagement (self-study, parents administrators, teachers)

Colchester High School fosters productive business, community, and higher education partnerships that help support student learning. Local businesses allow the students of CHS to participate in job shadowing, internships, and employment transition opportunities. Student of the month luncheons are sponsored by local businesses for deserving students. Businesses are also welcomed into the school to present career exploration options for the 9th and 10th grade students during the Fast Forward Career day. CHS also has an employment specialist who analyzes student interests and assists students as a job coach; however, due to recent budget limitations this position has been limited to serving special education students. The community provides ample goods, services, and monetary donations that help support the students at CHS. There is a very active boosters club that supports the athletic teams with purchasing needs and team support. Private donations were made to the school for a new athletic field and annual scholarships. Local farms and businesses donate fresh foods to the school food service. Likewise, athletic teams, clubs, teacher advisory groups, and senior seminar students participate in community service, food drives, and fundraising for the community. There are vocational, e-learning, and higher education learning options available to students at CHS. Eighty-five students attend the local technical schools in Burlington and Essex. Through e-learning programs such as Virtual High School, students are able to take courses not presently offered at CHS. Additionally, the dual enrollment program allows students to earn both high school and college credit as students take courses at University of Vermont, Community College of Vermont, and Champlain College. Students also participate in college fairs and college information nights to assist them in their post-secondary choices. Colchester High School's partnerships with businesses, community, and post-secondary institutions provide students with opportunities to enrich their education and explore career options. (principal, food service director, parents, panel presentation)

The school site and plant supports and enhances most aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning. The school has recently added additional practice fields, reconstructed its ropes course, and resodded the football field. The parking lot has been resealed and relined and a video surveillance system installed. Most classrooms have comfortable space for teaching and learning. There are 9th and 10th grade team-taught humanities courses in which teachers share a large, double-sized classroom that promotes interdisciplinary learning. The library media center has sufficient space to accommodate individual students and classes for information literacy. The school theater space can accommodate school-wide assemblies, drama productions, and other performances due to its layout and capacity. The band room has sufficient space and separate practice rooms for individual learning. The physical education facility both inside and outside the building allows extensive student choices and a variety of instructional practices. This includes, but is not limited to, a rock climbing wall, ropes course, athletic fields, mountain biking, and canoeing on Lake Champlain.

There is a sufficient amount of storage space throughout the building for athletic and co-curricular equipment. This space includes several storage closets within the building and an outdoor garage and shed. Despite this room for storage, some students still drop off their equipment under the stairwells, and staff members have used part of the boiler room as a storage holding area. (self-study, facilities tour, teachers)

Handicapped accessibility is limited throughout the building. Some science labs have limited space for mobility. In one classroom, power cords have been installed from the ceiling above each lab table to prevent students from tripping on the cords. Moreover, several of the safety showers and eye wash stations within these labs are blocked and not clearly identified. In addition, fire extinguishers are not readily accessible in several classrooms. The school does not have an operational intercom system, hindering communication throughout the building. The building temperature is not conducive to student learning at certain times of the year. Classrooms situated on the outside of the building sometimes experience extreme hot or cold temperatures. These extreme temperatures have hindered the hands-on student learning environment in the Crossroads Program. Despite the current facility limitations, the faculty is flexible about moving classes and adjusting instruction when appropriate. Thus, the school site and plant support or enhance most aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning. (classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing, facility tour, teachers, school leadership team)

The physical plant and facilities are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. FireProTec has completed the annual maintenance inspection and service on the portable fire extinguishers and the fire suppression system. The alarm and smoke detectors are monitored closely and formally inspected annually. The elevator is inspected annually and the most recent inspection deemed it is in "good" working condition. The septic system is inspected annually, and the most recent inspection revealed the system to be functioning adequately. The school is conscientious about complying with federal and state safety regulations. (self-study, facility tour, central office administrators)

Equipment is adequate, properly maintained, catalogued, and replaced when appropriate. Each classroom is equipped with proper materials that support student learning. There are one to three computers in each classroom, and several classrooms have SMARTBoards and/or LCD projectors. The physical education department has extensive resources to support their program (canoes, rock climbing wall, mats, and bicycles). Additionally, the Crossroads program has sufficient necessary equipment to support these students. Through Sharepoint, faculty can report facility issues to the maintenance supervisor for repair, and this system can also be monitored by the administrators. Some concern about increasing the response time on maintenance requests was expressed by teachers. Inventory is catalogued and verified yearly via department. Replacement of classroom furniture is determined by the principal and team leaders on an as-needed basis. Textbook replacement is on a five-year department rotation. Sharepoint is utilized to inventory and maintain technology, (computers, SMARTBoards) and is reviewed by the information technology teacher. Computers are on a five-year replacement cycle and other forms of technology are replaced on an as-needed basis. Recent budget problems have had a negative effect on the replacement of furniture and equipment, but the principal and her staff have become creative in addressing these needs. Classrooms and programs contain the necessary equipment to for the school to achieve its mission and expectations for student learning. (self-study, teachers, administrators, building and grounds supervisor)

The school has a planned program of building and site management that is adequately funded. There is a maintenance contract in place with Climate Systems for the school's heating, cooling, and refrigeration systems. Currently, all stakeholders are frustrated over the inability of the HVAC system to provide a comfortable learning environment on a consistent basis. There is concern about the dividing walls within the larger classrooms which require attention and can take class time to open or close. There is ongoing discussion to automate them. Although the current budget is adequate to support the facilities, the staff expresses concerns over the availability of custodial staff to address building needs as they occur during the school day. Windows are only sporadically cleaned, and consistent upkeep of the school property is sometimes compromised by other immediate concerns that occur during the school day. The Sharepoint software system allows staff members to adequately plan and monitor building level requests for repair.

This includes the ability to flag safety issues needing immediate attention. The maintenance staff follows-up with each request, and there is ongoing communication with administration and staff. Planning of building needs and site management is evident, yet ongoing concerns contribute to lower staff morale. (self-study, school leadership team, facility tour, teachers)

Although there is ongoing planning to address future programming, staffing, facility, and technology needs, budgetary concerns have limited their fulfillment. Using K-12 enrollment summaries supplied by Powerschool and information provided by the district demographer, the administrators can project the program and staffing needs of the school for the upcoming years. Using this data, the principal plans the appropriate number of course sections and class selections needed for future programs and staffing needs. The principal has many programming ideas to enrich student learning at CHS, including the Options program which allows alternative methods for students to gain credit for graduation through internships and other connections with the community. The district has a formal three-year technology plan which addresses teacher needs and training. Five years ago, not every classroom had access to a computer. There is at least one computer in each classroom, three lap top carts, thirty-nine SMARTBoards, an LCD projector in almost every classroom, and Red Cat(amplified voice) systems throughout the building. In house professional development opportunities are offered to train teachers in how to use the new technology within the classroom during collaborative work group and faculty meeting times. In addition, the development of a technology integration specialist position to assist teachers with use of technology within the classroom is being discussed. However, the current state of the economy will affect the degree to which the school will be able to carry out these plans. The principal asks team leaders for input on future capital needs within the departments. Each team leader develops projected budgetary needs which are reviewed and considered when allotting money to each department. With uncertain sources of revenue, future budgets will determine whether plans will be implemented and whether funding will be adequate for the school to achieve its mission and expectations for student learning. (self-study, administrators, school leadership team)

The current budget is adequate to maintain the appropriate programs, supplies, and materials. The school has lost several teaching positions resulting in fewer course offerings and staffing for student support systems such as the writers workshop and math center. The teachers and administrators reevaluated some assigned duties and course offerings to ensure that there remains sufficient coverage for both writers workshop and the math center. While some study hall numbers have increased, the trade-off was felt to be more positive for students. There is no longer money available for summer curriculum work, and funds for individual outside professional development opportunities have been limited. There are new technologies in the building, but teachers have not been provided proper training and oversight, any true lack of integration across curriculum areas will remain minimal. Although there is currently an adequate budget, future levels of revenue and potential cuts will prevent the school from providing opportunities for students to meet twenty-first century learning expectations. (self-study, facility tour, school leadership team)

Faculty and building administrators participate in the budget process, including its development and implementation. Department team leaders meet with teachers to discuss budgetary needs. Team leaders have opportunities to meet with the principal to advocate for their needs, and each has its own criteria for distribution of funds. The principal then meets with the superintendent to discuss staffing levels and the overall budget for school. The principal regularly updates the faculty on the budgetary process and invites them to be part of the process. The principal has not been able to fund several new initiatives over the past several years because of limited funds. The staff continues to maximize its existing resources, yet the lack of monetary support has hindered implementation of school-wide initiatives and has limited resources. The staff continues to find creative ways to collaboratively produce high quality student services despite the budget shortfall. However, with additionally diminished resources, the school will not be able to achieve its mission and expectations for student learning. (self-study, teachers, central office administrators, school leadership team)

Commendations

1. The variety of methods used to communicate with parents and community to strengthen the school to home partnership
2. The school has a welcoming open-door policy that encourages parents to visit, attend, and participate as valuable members of the school community
3. The numerous business partnerships where students can take advantage of real-life applications outside the classroom
4. The opportunities that exist beyond Colchester High School course offerings through virtual learning and higher education
5. The electronic system that allows staff members to track, catalogue, repair, and schedule the replacement of existing equipment
6. The clean well maintained building and grounds
7. The collaboration of staff and administrators to creatively problem-solve to address ongoing concerns with diminishing resources

Recommendations

1. Implement the online grading system for parents to track student progress.
2. Develop and implement a plan to ensure equipment is stored properly
3. Ensure handicapped accessibility throughout the building
4. Review and update science lab safety procedures and the accessibility of safety equipment and fire extinguishers within classrooms
5. Review and implement plans to maintain consistent temperatures within the building throughout the entire school year
6. Ensure that building repairs and consistent upkeep of school property are completed in an efficient manner
7. Establish an electronic means for communication throughout the school
8. Align budgetary decisions between the school board, central office, and the school to provide dependable and adequate funding necessary for the school to achieve its mission and expectations for student learning

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

A school's initial/continued accreditation is based on satisfactory progress implementing valid recommendations of the visiting committee and others identified by the Commission as it monitors the school's progress and changes which occur at the school throughout the decennial cycle. To monitor the school's progress in the Follow-Up Program, the Commission requires that the principal of Colchester 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 Commission in its notification letters to the school. School officials are expected to have completed or be in the final stages of completion of all valid visiting committee recommendations by the time the Five-Year Progress Report is submitted. The Commission may request additional Special Progress Reports if one or more of the Standards are not being met in a satisfactory manner or if additional information is needed on matters relating to evaluation report recommendations or substantive changes in the school.

To ensure that it has current information about the school, the Commission has an established Policy on Substantive Change requiring that principals of member schools report to the Commission within sixty days (60) of occurrence any substantive change which negatively impacts the school's adherence to the Commission's Standards for Accreditation. The report of substantive change must describe the change itself and detail any impact which the change has had on the school's ability to meet CPSS Standards. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included in the Appendix on page 54. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

The visiting committee would like to thank the students, parents, teachers, staff members, and administrators of Colchester High School for their hospitality and assistance during our visit to the school. We must commend the dedication and professionalism of all those we came in contact with and the commitment to learning evident throughout Colchester High School.

Appendix A

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

(9/08)

Appendix B

ROSTER OF TEAM MEMBERS

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