

## **Community Resources for Learning**

*Support Standard 7*

**7.1 Colchester High School (CHS) does an acceptable job engaging parents and families as partners in each student’s education and encourages their participation in school programs.** CHS works to engage parents in their students’ academic lives through outreach efforts such as inviting parents to open house, parent-teacher conferences, Laker Learning Connections and eighth grade transition night. Parents are regularly contacted regarding the learning needs of their children. Progress reports, attendance reports and report cards are mailed home four times each during the course of the year. In addition to formal progress reports, parents are regularly contacted by teachers, especially if a student is in danger of receiving a grade of a D or lower.

Additionally, parents are asked to participate on new teacher hiring committees, in Booster Club meetings, Friends of Colchester Music, as part of Project Graduation, and in the budget process. The Guidance Department also hosts several parent nights including senior and junior college nights, and financial aid nights. Over the course of the year, parents are frequently invited to programs that showcase students’ work such as Science Essential Topics Night, Senior Seminar presentations, the Heritage Banquet, Public Speaking Tribute speeches, the annual Art Show, Theater Productions, and music concerts. Parents are also invited to share in students’ success when students are honored at the Student of the Month Luncheon.

CHS has several ways of communicating information to parents. These include the school Website, *The Laker View*, a monthly newsletter with information from administrators and teachers, *The Laker Voice*, a quarterly student newspaper, and articles in the local paper *The Colchester Sun*. At the beginning of each school year, all students receive a student planner that

includes all school rules and policies. Parents also receive a mailing informing them of school policies, Internet usage rules, health forms, and a school calendar. CHS uses the Alert Now system to proactively communicate with parents about events such as parent-teacher conferences, daily attendance reporting, open house, impending budget votes, and in the event of a school closing or emergency. The school also displays a marquee in the front of the grounds for all parents and community members to view upcoming events and activities.

*Some ways to improve parent, student and school communication would be to invest in an online grading system where students and parents could check grades, allowing students to have school e-mail accounts, and initiating a parent teacher organization.*

**7.2 CHS consistently fosters productive business, community, and higher education partnerships, which create opportunities and enhance student learning.** Local businesses support several CHS initiatives, through in-kind and monetary contributions by sponsoring Student-of-the-Month luncheons, various club activities, Project Graduation and athletics. In addition, local businesses and agencies provide job shadowing, training, internships and employment for many CHS students. The Options Program at CHS allows students to obtain high school credit for these alternative plans.

CHS students regularly contribute to the community in many ways throughout their four years at CHS. During the year faculty and students collect food, money and various household items which are donated to charitable organizations. After-school clubs organize annual Thanksgiving food drives, blood drives and daffodil donations. Through the Teacher Advisory (TA) program, students build gingerbread houses that are donated to local organizations such as VT Children's Hospital, senior centers and nursing homes. Also, students volunteer time with programs such as The Malletts Bay Mentoring, where students spend free class mods supporting

elementary students. All seniors are required to complete “Senior Seminar” a semester course where they design and implement a community-based service learning project. The senior project requires a minimum of six hours of community service and culminating individual presentations which are open to the community. CHS maintains a strong partnership with the Colchester Parks and Recreation Department offering the school facilities to the community to support their educational, athletic, and community programs.

CHS offers a variety of higher education opportunities. Students are invited to a college fair at Saint Michael’s College, the University of Vermont and Champlain Valley Union High School. Guidance counselors work closely with families and students to publicize and increase student attendance at college fairs. Counselors also support students through the entire application and financial aid process. CHS has a close partnership with VSAC to identify and support students who may be the first in their family to attend college. CHS students have the opportunity for dual enrollment with local colleges. The Vermont Academy of Science and Technology (VAST) program also allows CHS students to immerse themselves on a college campus during their junior and/or senior year. Colchester High School has rededicated itself to supporting local higher education by providing observation and student teacher placements for future educators.

Colchester High School provides diverse, challenging educational experiences due to the strong partnership with the community. *However, we could make more long- term rigorous internship opportunities available to students within the business community to foster future learning and employment opportunities.*

**7.3 The school site and plant support and enhance all aspects of the educational program and the support services for student learning.** The campus has seen a lot of outdoor

improvements. The new athletic facilities offer students additional practice fields. Along with the new fields, the school's football field was resodded, and the ropes course was reconstructed in 2008. The parking lot has recently been resealed and repainted which has allowed for more efficient regulation of parking as well as more spaces. There are now approximately 290 parking spaces for handicapped use, faculty, staff, and senior drivers. Some parking is also available for junior drivers, with overflow parking capabilities nearby the school. In addition to these physical improvements, a new video surveillance system was installed inside and outside of the building. The school's new video surveillance system will allow school officials to follow up on major vandalism that occurs in the future.

The school has also seen improvements inside of the building. The school reconfigured space to add new offices and a conference room. The moveable walls were replaced on the first floor in the summer of 2001. They enhance the freshmen core and sophomore humanities programs, providing more opportunities for team teaching and interdisciplinary connections. *However, the moveable walls that are used often need to be replaced.*

Many classrooms have received new furniture such as desks, tables and chairs in the last few years. In addition, the school bathrooms and boys' locker room have been updated. *However, the girls' locker room needs to be updated.*

The Colchester Alternative Program moved from Malletts Bay School in 2006 to a building outside CHS. This building is leased by the school district so is required to go through the building's landlord to complete work orders. It can therefore be challenging at times to make repairs and updates in this space. In addition, since space is limited in this building it restricts the growth of the program. *The school district needs a district-owned building that is adequate size so the CAP program can expand.*

In the NEASC Self-Study Survey results, the students and parents feel the school building and classrooms are appropriate conditions for learning. However, faculty, staff, and students consistently express concerns regarding room temperature at CHS. In the fall and late spring the second floor of the building is too warm, and the temperature does not provide an environment that is conducive to learning. In the winter the first floor of the building is often too cold. *The heating and cooling system is in working order but the effectiveness and efficiency is questionable.*

**7.4 The physical plant and facilities of Colchester High School meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with fire, health, and safety regulations.** State-approved inspectors inspect all building systems as required and issue a report to the business manager. The maintenance director and principal inspect the building regularly, and any concerns are addressed. Work orders are entered into SharePoint, the district's new internal software that provides the inputting, approval, and status of all work orders entered into the system. When code violations are evident or detected, immediate steps are taken to correct them, the appropriate personnel are notified, and plans for corrections are implemented. The school maintains a sufficient inventory of supplies to address routine maintenance and custodial issues. When necessary, outside contractors are scheduled to address special problems.

*One area of concern is that all classrooms and areas need to have an operational intercom system to implement the school's safety plan.*

**7.5 Equipment is adequate, properly maintained, inventoried, and generally replaced when appropriate.** At CHS equipment is maintained and replaced according to need and/or schedule. The facilities equipment (boiler, air-handling equipment, elevators, etc.) are maintained regularly and when necessary are state inspected. The members of individual

departments are responsible for informing their team leader of classroom and work space needs. Each department is also responsible for taking inventory of their own department's equipment, and making sure that it is properly maintained. There is a district-wide process for inventory of classroom equipment (desks, chairs, filing cabinets, etc). This process is done annually and coordinated by the CHS bookkeeper through team leaders. The Information Technology (IT) department inventories and has an annual schedule for replacing technology equipment. The library is currently responsible for replacing AV equipment as necessary. Annually, the principal and team leaders determine furniture replacement based on need. Every year the leadership team reviews and revises the five-year textbook adoption cycle as needs and resources change.

**7.6 A planned (but inadequately funded) program of building and site management attempts to provide the appropriate maintenance, repair, and cleanliness of the school plant.** The program is coordinated and supervised by the business manager, maintenance director and the building principal. The maintenance budget provides for necessary salaries, insurances, taxes, supplies, and equipment needed to maintain the facility. *Due to the age of the building, the maintenance budget will need to be increased to adequately maintain the building.* The maintenance director creates the schedule for the custodial and maintenance staff that repair and maintain the site. The maintenance director is responsible for training and managing the staff, purchasing supplies and equipment. There are two custodial shifts during the school day: 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and 2:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. The first shift consists of a one full-day custodian. *Colchester High School needs more than one first-shift custodian to respond to the needs of the building.* The second shift consists of a lead custodian, and five staff custodians. In addition to cleaning, the custodial staff is instructed to check their areas for items that need

maintenance or repair. If the custodial staff is unable to make a repair, a work order is entered into SharePoint. All maintenance requests from faculty/staff are also entered directly into the SharePoint work-order system. These requests must be approved by both the principal and the maintenance director. The district business manager also has oversight and can monitor this system. The work-order requests are prioritized according to the seriousness of the concern. The SharePoint work order system informs faculty and staff when their work-order has been approved and it also informs them of who will do the work and when. *A continuing area of concern is the speed of work-order completion and follow-through.*

**7.7 There is ongoing planning to address future programs, enrollment changes, staffing, facility, and technology needs as well as capital improvements.** The building principal analyzes statistics collected from several sources such as SASI, a student management software and enrollment program that monitors trends for the district business manager. This allows the building principal to address future programs that fit the school population. The principal compiles reports to study course enrollment trends, staffing levels, and course sections. SASI allows CHS to keep track of student demographics, grades, transcripts, and schedules as well as to develop the master schedule. SASI generates reports such as enrollment, daily attendance, class enrollment, and transcripts. It has the capability to sort information by student, by course, by department, or by teacher. SASI is provided by Pearson Education and they have decided to discontinue it. The Colchester School District (CSD) has spent the last year preparing for this change. CSD has purchased Power School to replace SASI. Power School is also made by Pearson Education and the transition is anticipated to be very smooth as Power School will be able to provide the same level of data management for all users. The CHS Leadership Team has

a clear process that they use annually to approve department course offerings and other potential new courses.

Bill Smith, a demographer for the State of Vermont, provides our enrollment projections for the entire district. These projections are based on the live birth rates, elementary school trends and residential building developments. Bill Smith's projections aid in the overall planning for future program changes. The team leaders and principal work together to develop long-range plans regarding departmental staff and course offerings especially since our district has declining enrollment.

The team leaders and the principal work with the technology department to ensure that the building and its technology are adequately funded and appropriate for the programs offered at the school. In 2006, members of the school's leadership team initiated the plans for addressing the lack of technology access for both students and teachers at CHS. Now every classroom at CHS has a minimum of one working computer, most classrooms have a mounted LCD projector, and some have Smart Boards. In addition, the principal relocated the computer labs from the second floor of CHS to the first floor, and that has resulted in expansions of the labs. CHS has also purchased three mobile laptop carts that teachers can sign out and bring to their classrooms. *However, we continue to struggle with the growing technological needs of our students and curriculum. As the school becomes a model for twenty-first-century learning, more access to technology will be necessary. The library, also technologically inadequate, needs to be updated and renovated to meet the needs of our current learners. The library is currently underused by the school population. The maintenance and IT departments need to assess the age and effectiveness of the electrical wiring system, based on technological needs.*



**7.8 The community and the district’s governing body struggles annually to pass the school budget. The community has provided a source of revenue to provide the minimal school programs, personnel, services, facilities, equipment, technological support, materials, and supplies required for students learning.** The school board begins to discuss the proposed budgets and the implications for property taxes typically October. These conversations take place in public meetings at the board level. In years past the public meetings regarding the school budget have had low parent and community member turn out. The school board also holds two public forums each January to receive feedback from the community regarding the school budget. These meetings occur before the board makes a final decision on the budget increase for the following year. These meetings also have low turnout from the community historically. The Superintendent then presents the proposed school budget at the annual town meeting. Each principal attends this meeting in an effort to answer any questions or concerns that might be raised regarding their building. Historically the community has raised many concerns during this meeting regarding special education funding, teacher salaries, and bussing.

The Colchester School District is not a high spending district. Within Chittenden county CSD is second to the bottom in per pupil spending. This level of funding provides the minimum funds for CHS to be able to meet state and local graduation requirements. Over the past two years the CHS principal has not been able to request additional funds to further the school, to provide high quality professional development, technology, or to meet our goal of providing students with a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education. CHS has several unmet needs in the areas of technology, professional development, and curriculum time for teachers. During this past school year CHS teachers did not receive any summer curriculum work dollars for professional development. The

CHS principal has had a pool of funds to send her faculty and staff to various professional development trainings; but, unfortunately, those funds were eliminated from the high school budget during the 2009-2010 budget reduction process.

The school district does have an active group of community volunteers (“Friends of Colchester Schools”) who help make the Colchester community aware of the budgeting process and budget. This group becomes active after the first budget fails; the Friends of Colchester Schools historically have not proactively assisted school leadership with educating the community on the budget for the first vote. The Superintendent as well as the High School Principal has met with the “Friends of Colchester Schools” to provide accurate information on how the annual budget will impact student learning. “Friends of Colchester Schools” and the Colchester Education Association have put up voting signs throughout the community and they have also distributed information flyers in local neighborhoods. The High School Principal has consistently written articles, contacted the press, and invited the community into CHS in order to increase the community’s knowledge of the high school. The High School principal has consistently demonstrated her ability to advocate strongly for the needs of CHS using data, research, and best practices.

During the past two years the CHS principal has not had the opportunity to present to the school board any fiscal needs due to the negative fiscal climate, and looming reductions. CHS has also been impacted greatly by the most recent failed budget. CHS has also lost several teaching positions which ultimately have resulted in fewer course offering and sections for students. This results in more sections of study hall for students. The loss of the Writers Workshop and Math Center has eliminated two very strong support services that we have been able to provide for our students. Another example of reductions at CHS is in the

Business/Technology department. This department has been reduced to a mere 1.2 FTE, this level of staffing eliminates our entire accounting program, and only allows those teachers to offer graduation requirement courses. CHS essentially has no business courses and no advanced technology courses for students beyond keyboarding and computer applications. Reductions in mathematics, science, and humanities during the past school year did not result in a loss of courses; however they have resulted in increased class size and lower staff morale.

Overall, the Colchester community has provided the schools with mixed support over the years. This mixed support creates an unreliable source of revenue. Over the past eleven years, the community has approved the budget seven times, and voted down our school budget four times on the first vote. In 2003, it took four budget votes before the school budget was approved by the voters. The community has also inconsistently approved articles to support the schools: a capital maintenance article was approved in 2002 and 2007, an instructional supplies article was approved in 2006, however in 2003 a technology article failed. In 2007 the voters declined all day kindergarten, and in 2009 they voted down an article for new athletic fields. Historically voter turnout in Colchester is low. *In order to provide and maintain appropriate school programs there needs to be initial support to pass the school budget. The school board needs to develop a plan that proactively educates the voters on the budgeting process, funding formula, and the needs of the schools. The school district also needs to work with the community to improve their overall relationship with the community, to increase community member's level of investment, and pride in the education of Colchester's children.*

**7.9 Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the budgetary process, including its development and implementation.** The budget planning process attempts to balance the need of adequate program support with the need for fiscal restraint. As a

district student enrollment is declining and this has caused the school board to deeply analyze overall course numbers and they have used class size as a main decision making factor during the budgeting process. The CHS principal is asked annually to present and defend the class size numbers at CHS. The school board would like to see class sizes of 25. This is often in conflict with the mission that CHS has for the Green House, where student class size is not to exceed 22. Many Colchester High School elective courses have class size numbers in excess of 25 students, at times this can become a detriment to learning. When class size is interpreted as low by the school board the principal is asked to defend and make recommend class size changes or staffing reductions for CHS.

The Superintendent also looks at the state requirements to determine where reductions can be made. The school board does their best to be fiscally responsible while balancing the needs of students at the same time; however, the recent fiscal restraints and series of failed budgets have resulted in a negative impact on student learning. *In order for Colchester High School to continue to excel the high school needs an infusion of funds to support school wide professional development, course offerings, and technology needs just to name a few. Each and every department area at Colchester High School could benefit from an increased departmental budget.*

The principal uses the CHS Leadership Team for input and decisions regarding our building based budget. The principal and team leaders use the mission and school wide EE's as a basis for all of our work, including budgetary decisions. The principal has a process that she uses to approve new courses. All new course proposals are discussed and based on student needs/interest, staffing and budget, some new courses are approved for the next school year.

New courses approved for the following year must submit all fiscal requirements for the course to the team leader and principal before it is approved by the leadership team. Team leaders are given a departmental budget by the principal annually. The principal works very hard to ensure that each department is funded at an appropriate level, based on the limited operational budget that the high school receives. Each Team leader has full autonomy to allocate funds as necessary within their departments. Team leaders work within their department(s) to determine fiscal needs and the distribution of funds. When necessary team leaders advocate for their departments financial needs with the principal. In the past when team leaders have requested more funds and or large one time purchases the principal has worked closely with the Superintendent to successfully meet those requests when possible. An example of this work is the new instruments in music. The principal has also used the leadership team to develop a textbook adoption cycle process for the annual purchase of all textbooks. The leadership team has also assisted the principal in determining our school wide technology needs. Four years ago every classroom at CHS did not have a computer, there were no smart boards, and there were no laptop carts in the building. The principal has worked closely with the leadership team to increase technology access at CHS, although we still have tremendous technological needs major improvements have been made over the past four years. *CHS needs to continue to invest in department-level budgets, professional development, and technology that will support the vision for twenty-first-century learning.*

## **Community Resources for Learning**

### *Executive Summary*

CHS works hard to effectively communicate with parents and community members. *The Laker View*, mailings, website, and advisory announcements keep students, their parents, and the community aware of opportunities available at the school.

CHS is supported by many organizations within the community. The local businesses, higher educational institutions, and a few generous community members have had a positive influence on the school and especially our athletic programs. All of this support has provided students with many opportunities to learn outside the school setting through internships and community service.

CHS now has a newly renovated boys' locker room, and new practice fields for athletics. Many classrooms at CHS have obtained new furniture over the last three years. The CHS girls' locker room needs to be renovated. The heating and cooling system at times does not provide for the best possible learning environment. CHS needs to ensure teachers and students have access to and proper training in technology tools that will model twenty-first-century Learning.

There are procedures and systems in place to ensure equipment is safe, inventoried and replaced as needed. CHS uses SharePoint to manage all of the maintenance requests. The CHS custodial staff does an acceptable job in the upkeep of the building; however, more resources are needed to support and adequately maintain day-to-day operations in the facility.

The administration and the faculty work annually on the course enrollment trends, program changes and the budget. It is difficult for the school board and community members to consistently pass the budget on the first vote. The Colchester School Board needs to develop a collaborative relationship with the Colchester voters to deepen voters' understanding of current educational practices, trends and the revenues needed. Colchester High School has been deeply

impacted by the last two years of failed budgets. This has resulted in the loss of staff and course offerings for students. CHS has also seen a dramatic decrease in the funding for professional development programs and summer curriculum work for teachers. This loss dramatically impacts our ability to differentiate instruction and to maintain our reputation as a high school with cutting-edge instruction. Although technology access has increased, we still remain with a large list of needs to become a twenty-first-century school.

**The Community Resources for Learning Committee believes that CHS deserves an acceptable rating for its assessment of student learning.**

## **Community Resources for Learning**

*Strengths & Needs*

### **Strengths:**

- The school has made several improvements in technology, and the school is committed to continuing to increase access and use of technology.
- Several improvements have been made to the athletic facilities.
- CHS has many strong partnerships within the community.
- The work-order process is well organized and accessible.
- A number of physical improvements in the school building have been made.
- CHS has many strong outreach efforts to communicate and engage parents in their child's education.
- Colchester High School students, faculty and staff frequently give back to the Colchester community and beyond through various service projects.
- The size of our school and classrooms is appropriate for our capacity.
- The principal advocates strongly for the needs of CHS.
- The principal has worked hard over the past four years to increase the access to technology building wide.
- In the face of adversity and failed budgets, the adults at CHS are able to put the needs of their students first.

### **Needs:**

- The school needs support from the community when it comes to passing the budget.



- Colchester needs to develop a plan that will improve relationships with the community, and proactively educate the voters on the budgeting process, funding formula, and the needs of the school.
- The school needs to renovate the girls' locker room.
- The school needs to replace all of the moveable walls in the classrooms on the first floor.
- The boilers and HVAC system overall might be in good shape, but the effectiveness of the heat in the classrooms seems to be problematic.
- The school needs to renovate the library based on the principles of twenty-first-century learning.
- The school needs to increase maintenance resources.
- The maintenance department needs to decrease the amount of time it takes to complete work orders.
- The custodial staff needs more than one first-shift custodian.
- The electrical structure in the building will need to be upgraded in some areas.
- The school needs to increase department-level budgets.
- The school needs to increase access to technology for students, faculty, and staff.
- The school needs an infusion of funds to support the professional development and growth of the adults at CHS.
- The school needs to continue to advocate for appropriate class sizes that support differential instruction in the classroom.

