



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC.
COMMISSION ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

VISITING TEAM REPORT

Simsbury High School

34 Farms Village Road
Simsbury, CT 06070 USA

Mr. Andrew O'Brien
Principal

Keith Berthiaume
Chemistry Teacher
Self-Study Coordinator

Jaqueline Petrella
Math Department Chair
Self-Study Coordinator

Mr. John Keogh
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.
Chair

Mary Lou Devine
Stonington High School
English Teacher
Assistant Chair

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

STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

Core Values and Beliefs About Learning

Curriculum

Instruction

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support Standards

School Culture and Leadership

School Resources for Learning

Community Resources for Learning

CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

CURRICULUM

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

INSTRUCTION

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and Learning Standard

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

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

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Support Standard

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

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

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

Support Standard

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

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

School and Community Summary

School and Community Summary

Simsbury High School is located at 34 Farms Village Road in Simsbury, Connecticut. Part of Hartford County and approximately 14.5 miles west of Hartford, the state capital, Simsbury is approximately 34.5 square miles in area.

A town marked by its rural, small-town nature, Simsbury grew from a population of 5,000 in 1950 to 23,234 in 2000. The population continued to rise to 23,511 in 2010, and according to the most recent census data, it was projected to reach 23,975 by 2014. This represents a projected change of 2% between 2010 and 2014. There have been demographic changes in town, however, which have resulted in a shrinking school-aged population. Simsbury residents under age five declined from 7.2% of the population in 2000, to 6% by 2012, and residents 5 to 7 years old declined from 23.8% in 2010 to 17% in 2012. This drop has been the result of a proportionally larger adult population in town (although the percentage of residents age 65 and over has only increased from 12.5% to 14%).

Census data places the median household income in Simsbury at \$115,000, significantly above the average for the state (\$69,461). Per capita income for the past year was \$56,673. The net grand list for the town of Simsbury was \$2,251,625,275 in 2013, placing it 47th out of 169 Connecticut towns. As of 2014, Simsbury had an unemployment rate of only 5.5%, which is below the Hartford County rate of 8.1% and the state rate of 7.8%. The poverty rate in Simsbury is only 2.2%, compared with 11.5% in Hartford County, and 10% in the state of Connecticut. Census data indicates that 97.5% of residents age 25 and older are high school graduates, and 66% have bachelor's degrees or higher, while the rates of educational attainment statewide are 89% for high school completion and 37% for bachelor's or higher. Nearly 87% of residents own their own homes, well above the Connecticut rate of 68%, and the median value of these homes is \$338,000, significantly above the state average of \$270,000.

Simsbury High School is currently grouped as a part of District Reference Group B. According to the 2012-13 School Strategic Profile, 8.3% of students (375 district-wide) are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, as compared to a 9.9% rate in DRG B and a 36.7% rate statewide. The school district has no students who are documented as homeless, and according to recent census data, only 1.9% of the town's population lives at or below the poverty level.

As of 2014, the largest employers in the town of Simsbury were The Hartford Life Insurance and Investment/Financial Services Companies, Ensign-Bickford Industries, Chubb Insurance, and the McLean residential and rehabilitative services facility. Employment in town has consisted primarily of jobs in finance and insurance, government, and retail with smaller numbers of jobs in accommodations and food services, manufacturing, and construction. The Hartford, a primary source of employment and tax revenue in the community, has recently relocated, so this profile has shifted a bit in the last year. New data since the relocation are not yet available.

The most recent District Strategic Profile indicates demographics are as follows: 5.4% Asian American (245), 5.1% Black (230), 5.1% Hispanic (232), 83.5% White (3,770), with 0.9% students identifying with two or more races (39). In short, 16.5% of Simsbury Public School's total population is of minority background. In contrast, 3.1% of Simsbury's professional staff is of minority background. Thirty-one students attend SHS through the Open Choice program, which provides the opportunity for students from urban areas such as Hartford to attend school in non-urban school districts, and vice versa (135 across the entire district). Additionally, SHS is proud to support the ABC program, in which five boys from urban areas around the country live in a residential environment in town and attend the high school. The non-English speaking population is small, as only 4.7% of the district's students (excluding pre-kindergarten) reside in homes in which English is not the primary spoken

language, and only 1.1% of K-12 students are not fluent in English. Once again, these figures compare with 2.0% in DRG B and 5.8% statewide. The total minority population of SHS is 13.3%.

There are twelve schools in the town of Simsbury. The public school system includes five elementary schools: Central Elementary School, Latimer Lane Elementary School, Squadron Line Elementary School, Tariffville Elementary School, and Tootin' Hills Elementary School; the total elementary school population for 2015-16 is 1,983 students. Henry James Memorial School serves the town's grades 7-8 population of 710 students, and Simsbury High School serves the town's grades 9-12 population. In addition, there are five private schools located within Simsbury: Ethel Walker School (6-12), St. Mary's School (K-8), The Cobb School (preK-6), The Master's School (K-12), and Westminster School (9-12). As of 2015 there were 22 students home-schooled in the district, and 143 students in charter or magnet schools. There were also 18 students district-wide in special education outplacement programs. Simsbury Public School's district-wide enrollment is 4,133 students for the 2015-2016 year, which represented a -2.8% enrollment change from the previous year. Since 2005, Simsbury's district-wide enrollment has declined from 4,941 students to the current 4,133 students, for a total decline of 16.4%.

Simsbury High School is currently comprised of 1,440 students in grades 9-12 (as of November 2015). For the 2015-2016 year, the grade configuration is as follows: grade 9, 368 students; grade 10, 335; grade 11, 372; and grade 12, 365. This represents a population decline at the high school level from 2011's high of 1,600 students – a 9% drop over five years. Furthermore, projections for the coming decade are for a continuing decline in enrollment, with an expectation that Simsbury High School's student population may decline by 14-19% from current numbers, with a projected enrollment in 1,232 in 2020-2021 and 1,165 in 2025-2026, if current trends continue. District-wide, the prediction is for a loss of 11.8% percent over the ten year period, so the enrollment trend may begin moving in a positive direction again roughly ten years out.

The most recent data on Simsbury expenditure per pupil for students assigned to the school is \$15,423 (currently unaudited figures for the 2014-2015 school year), which is slightly lower than the state average of \$16,424. 57.56% percentage of local resources--including grants, state, and federal funds-- is spent on public education; the number rises to a high of 72.56% when considering only the percentage of local taxation spent on schools.

Average class size for core academic subjects is 23 students per class, yielding an average student load for core academic teachers of 115 students across five sections, not counting SHS Connect Advisory students or study hall. Recommended class size range is 21-25 students, with the exception of level III mathematics courses, which have an average of 15 students per class and a recommended range of 14-16. This lower student average is an intentional policy decision geared to providing more one-on-one instruction to the neediest students. There are only 13 sections of level III courses. Recommended class size range for elective areas is 15-19 students (teacher load: 75-95), with the exception of business and physical education classes, which have a recommended class size range of 21-25 students and a teacher load similar to that of core academic teachers.

Simsbury High School offers courses at both "honors" and "academic" levels, with Advanced Placement offerings in many disciplines as well (a total of more than 20 AP courses offered annually). An impressive 68% of Simsbury High School students have taken at least one Advanced Placement course before graduation, and 11% of students are served by the special education program. Students are required to earn a total of 25 credits in order to graduate, although many students take more.

In 2015, average daily attendance rate for students was 95.7%, a rate that has been steady for at least three years. Additionally, 75.7% of students had a 95% or higher attendance rate for the year. Comparably, the SHS teacher attendance rate, excluding professional days, was 97.8% for 2014-2015 (4.05 days per teacher), which represents an improvement from 2012-2013's already high rate of 96.7% attendance or 6.2 days (based on 185 days of school). As a point of comparison, in 2012-2013 the DRG B teacher attendance rate was 7.8 days per year, and the statewide average was 8.6, more than 50% higher than the Simsbury teacher rate. SHS students attend school 180 days per year (with four additional professional development days for teachers), and there are 986 instructional hours in the school year.

Simsbury High School has an extremely consistent and high student graduation rate. District-wide, Simsbury had a 0.3% dropout rate in 2011-2012, compared to a 2.1% statewide rate. Indeed, Simsbury out-performed over 70% of districts in the state in this regard. According to guidance department records, SHS had a 0.13% dropout rate in 2014 and 0% in 2015 as of November 2015. SHS's graduation rate is favorable as well, with 95.6% of the Class of 2012 earning their diplomas, compared with an 84.8% rate statewide. Furthermore, Simsbury students have an extremely strong track record (over 90%) of pursuing higher education. In 2014, for example, 85% attended four-year college programs and 7% attended two-year college programs, while in 2015, the most recent graduating class, 81.2% attended four-year college programs and 8% attended two-year college programs. In the Class of 2014, 1.3% entered the military, and 2.6% of the class went directly into some form of employment. The percentage of students going directly into employment increased to 5.6% for the class of 2015, while only 0.3% students entered the military in that year. SHS graduates have a strong record of acceptance to schools that are high on their lists, with 20% of graduating students in 2014 were accepted to Tier 1 colleges and universities as identified by Barron's.

There are many educational opportunities available to students in the greater Simsbury community beyond those provided at Simsbury High School itself. For example, a number of SHS students attend the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, and many of SHS's students participate in school-organized programs that reach outward such as job shadow days, fundraising drives and activities such as the annual Turkey Trot and National Honor Society blood drive. On the cultural front, SHS participate in a sister-school relationship with China, and 30 Simsbury students had the opportunity to attend a Latin Day experience, among other opportunities. Every year SHS students attend a variety of trips to foreign countries during school vacation, largely through the world languages department.

Simsbury has a flourishing Future Business Leaders of America program, and 14 students were inducted into the National Business Honor Society last year. 18 FBLA members competed at the National Conference in Chicago in 2014-2015, with two students completing the Junior Achievement Career Connections for young women program and 23 students completing the Junior Achievement Entrepreneurial Program. Beyond the business front, Simsbury High School partners with local colleges and universities – St. Joseph's, Central Connecticut State University, and University of Connecticut, for example, for student teachers and administrative internships.

Simsbury students also have many opportunities for recognition for their achievements. Every year, SHS hosts a school-wide honors assembly, art show, and various small honors programs. Students can be inducted into National Honor Society and honor societies in world languages and Tri-M, for example. A large percentage of Simsbury students participate in athletics, both at the junior and varsity levels. Beyond the school walls, Simsbury students participate in the state Scholastic Art and Writing competitions, as well as in the Hartford District Robotics competition and regional mock trial competitions. Two students were presenters at the Connecticut Junior Science and Humanities Symposium at UConn, and two graduating seniors were awarded Ensign Darling Vocal Fellowships at the region's flagship entertainment venue, the Bushnell Performing Arts Center, to name just a few of SHS students' achievements.

Core Values, Beliefs and Learning Expectations

Preparation:

We provide a rich and rigorous academic foundation for all students.

- We emphasize the meaningful application of knowledge and skills within the curriculum.
- We implement teaching methods designed to promote both critical thinking and creativity and to engage

students in shared ownership for learning.

- We ensure that students of all abilities are included, challenged, and given appropriate instruction in preparation for college and careers.

Passion:

We offer diverse learning experiences that encourage students to discover and to develop their unique interests and talents.

- We provide an elective program characterized by wide variety and high quality.
- We present students with opportunities to connect and to excel as they explore a broad range of extra-curricular activities.
- We give students opportunities for choice—in the classroom, during course selection, and throughout extra-curricular pursuits.

Personal Growth:

We partner with families to promote character in our students as they develop into ethical and compassionate adults.

- We expect that all members of the school community will demonstrate the tenets of the Trojan Code: respect, honor, and responsibility.
- We provide students opportunities both to work collaboratively and to develop their potential as leaders.
- We guide students toward active citizenship, including service to a larger community.

Learning Expectations

Within the Simsbury High School curriculum, students are expected to demonstrate understanding of each course's Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs). Teachers have explicitly defined these ELOs as the skills and “big ideas” that are central to an understanding of the discipline. In addition, students must have opportunities to practice and to demonstrate mastery of the following SHS Learning Expectations:

- Read and comprehend complex texts independently
- Develop and strengthen writing skills
- Construct arguments that are supported by evidence
- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
- Conduct short and sustained research
- Evaluate/critique the work of self and others
- Use technology and digital media strategically and responsibly
- Demonstrate personal responsibility and ethical behavior (Trojan Code)

Introduction

Introduction

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

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

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

Teaching and Learning Standards

- Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

- Curriculum

- Instruction

- Assessment of and for Student Learning

Support of Teaching and Learning Standards

- School Culture and Leadership

- School Resources for Learning

- Community Resources for Learning

The accreditation program for public schools involves a threefold process: the self-study conducted by the local professional staff, the on-site evaluation conducted by the Committee's visiting team, 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 team and those identified by the Committee in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

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

people.

The self-study of Simsbury High School extended over a period of 12 school months from April 2015 to May 2016.

Public schools evaluated by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools must complete appropriate materials to assess their alignment with the Standards for Accreditation and the quality of their educational offerings in light of the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, and unique student population. In addition to using the Self-Study Guides developed by a representative group of New England educators and approved by the Committee, Simsbury High School also used questionnaires developed by The Research Center at Endicott College to reflect the concepts contained in the Standards for Accreditation. These materials provided discussion items for a comprehensive assessment of the school by the professional staff during the self-study.

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

The Process Used by the Visiting team

A visiting team of sixteen members was assigned by the Committee on Public Secondary Schools to evaluate the Simsbury High School. The visiting team members spent four days in Simsbury, reviewed the self-study documents which had been prepared for their examination, met with administrators, teachers, other school and system personnel, students and parents, shadowed students, visited classes, and interviewed teachers to determine the degree to which the school aligns with the Committee's Standards for Accreditation. Since the members of the visiting team represented classroom teachers, guidance counselors, library/media specialists, building administrators, and central office administrators, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Simsbury High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 44 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 8 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 32 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of

student learning

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

Standard 1 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Simsbury High School (SHS) engages in a dynamic, collaborative and inclusive process informed by current research to identify, revise, and commit to its core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations. During the 2013-2014 school year, the school's leadership team, a standing committee consisting of nine appointed faculty members, three administrators, nine students, one non-certified staff member, two parents, and two board of education members, was charged with the task of reviewing the existing SHS mission and crafting a statement describing the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The initial process involved leadership team members reviewing the existing SHS mission statement, existing district policies, NEASC indicators, and mission statements from other high performing high schools to inform this process and thus ensure that the resulting document is reflective of the most important values of SHS. The leadership team then brainstormed potential revisions of the existing document and prioritized statements that reflected the essence of SHS's core values and beliefs. Each draft was evaluated using three criteria: strength, resonance, and endurance. The leadership team analyzed the comprehensive list of core values and beliefs to identify keywords that might serve as an overarching foundation, ultimately leading to the current motto of "Preparation, Passion, and Personal Growth" to capture the essence of the school's core values. The next step involved expanding this to a full description of the school's core values and beliefs by clarifying and elaborating on the vision summarized by "Preparation, Passion, and Personal Growth." Throughout the process, the leadership team sought feedback from the full faculty, as well as through student focus groups and individual conversations with various stakeholders. The final draft was adopted during the June 2014 faculty meeting. According to the Endicott survey, 92 percent of students report that they are familiar with the school's core values and beliefs, and 90 percent of parents feel that the school's core values and beliefs reflect what the community values about student learning. The collaborative, dynamic, and inclusive process used by SHS to identify its core values and beliefs ensures that the statement crafted by the school reflects the core values and beliefs of the entire school community.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- teachers
- parents
- school board
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 1 Indicator 2

Conclusions

SHS has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies. Each expectation is defined by specific and measurable school-wide analytic rubrics which define high levels of achievement. After crafting the school's core values and beliefs documents, the leadership team reviewed the existing learning expectations to determine how well they aligned to the prevailing thought on what students should know for the 21st century. The school hired an outside consultant to facilitate the development of its 21st century learning expectations, and the school engaged the department supervisors in identifying anchor standards for their content areas, integrating the Common Core Standards when relevant. The outcome of this process was a document entitled the "SHS Learning Expectations for College and Career Readiness" that consisted of eight expectations related to academic skills such as reading, writing, problem-solving, and constructing arguments along with the expectation that students develop personal responsibility and ethical behavior. To ensure that the new 21st century learning expectations became central to the school's academic program, the faculty developed school-wide analytic rubrics to measure the achievement of these expectations. Each expectation is broken down into a few components, and each component is paired with four ratings that include the rating of "Meets Expectations" to describe the targeted level of success and the rating of "Exceeds Expectations" to challenge some students to achieve beyond the minimal criteria for success. Each department chose pertinent rubrics and interpreted these rubrics in a manner specific to its content area, and the school created a Trojan Code Committee to further define what it means to develop personal responsibility and ethical behavior created for every area of the school, including classrooms, common spaces, buses, and school event locations. According to the Endicott survey, 85 percent of students believe that these expectations are challenging, and 90 percent of faculty members believe that these expectations are both challenging and measurable. The 21st century learning expectations, found online and posted in classrooms and around that building, are clearly visible and accessible. By developing challenging and measurable 21st century expectations for all students and corresponding rubrics to measure the achievement of these expectations, the SHS community is prepared to fully embed its core values and beliefs throughout its educational program.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 1 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are reflected in the culture of the school and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations, but only somewhat drive all curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the school's classrooms. The Trojan Code has become an integral part of the school's clear and universal commitment to its core values of assuming personal responsibility and ethical behavior. The Trojan Code committee has identified the virtues of honor, responsibility and respect and has worked tirelessly to promote these virtues. Students are asked to "know the code" and are rewarded with Trojan Code tickets that can be redeemed for prizes in weekly drawings in recognition of exemplary behavior. The implementation of the Trojan Code has resulted in the reduction of disciplinary referrals from 3,000 to just over 700 per school year in a three-year span, and the quarterly newsletter *Trojan Code Trends* reports that 86 percent of staff members and 75 percent of students feel that the school culture is positive, which is easily confirmed through conversations with students and teachers in the building. The core value of "Passion" exuded by many students, staff members, parents, and members of the Simsbury community is also easily identifiable in the school culture. SHS offers more than 120 electives in its curriculum and offers 45 clubs and 38 varsity sports so that students have many opportunities to find and pursue their passions. Many decisions have emanated from the school's core values and beliefs. Most notable is the design of the school schedule, which consists of eight periods to provide opportunities for students to choose from its wide variety of electives while building in two block days per week to provide extended time for each subject to foster inquiry, problem solving, and depth of understanding. The schedule also provides teachers for weekly time to collaborate with other teachers teaching a common course through professional learning communities (PLCs). The principal has the autonomy to establish budgetary priorities that are aligned to the school's core values and has recently established both a peer observation program that involves all of the school's faculty members and a walk-through protocol designed to gather general information about a particular problem of practice, both of which have been implemented to ensure that instructional practices reflect the school's beliefs about learning. However, while SHS has completed a revision of all curriculum documents using a common template using an *Understanding by Design* approach to curriculum, the school has not yet fully embedded its 21st century learning expectations into its curriculum documents. Furthermore, while teachers occasionally use the school-wide rubrics to assess student projects or performance tasks, the school does not formally assess either individual student or whole-school progress in achieving its 21st century learning expectations, and professional conversations across the school are not centered on improving achievement of these expectations. The school recognizes the need to move forward with explicitly integrating the 21st century learning expectations into instructional and assessment practices and, as part of its Two-Year Targeted Plan, the school plans to place a greater focus on using school-wide rubrics more consistently and creating and implementing a formal process for collecting and reporting individual student progress in meeting the 21st century learning expectations. When the beliefs, core values, and learning expectations become a driving force in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, the likelihood that all students experience equitable opportunities to achieve success and mastery of the 21st century learning expectations will be maximized.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work

- teacher interview
- teachers
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 1 Indicator 4

Conclusions

The school regularly reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based on research, multiple data sources, as well as on district and school community priorities. The school is committed to the regular and inclusive revision of the core values so that the entire school community has a shared sense of ownership. The school has consistently reviewed and updated the school's core values and beliefs every five years. The last mission statement that was revised in June 2009 was again revised and approved by the SHS faculty in a June 2014 faculty meeting. The core values poster has the notation, "Revised 2014. Next revision scheduled 2019." This notation underscores the perception that this is a living document and that the school is committed to the notion that all stakeholders must have the opportunity to provide input into all future revisions. The committee recently researched the core value statements of other schools and examined information from the school's annual report containing data on student achievement and discipline and enrollment patterns associated with elective courses as an integral part of the review and revision process. For the next revision, the available data will include data resulting from its planned efforts to measure student progress in meeting the 21st century learning expectations. Because Simsbury High School regularly reviews its core values, beliefs, and learning expectations based on current research and available data, it ensures that its core values and beliefs will continue to be relevant in guiding the school's programs and policies.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 1 Commendations

Commendation

The inclusion of all stakeholders in a dynamic and collaborative process to articulate meaningful core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The identification of core values and beliefs that accurately reflect the thinking of the school community

Commendation

The creation of 21st century learning expectations that are measurable and aligned with the school's core values and beliefs and school-wide analytic rubrics that allow the school to measure student achievement of these expectations

Commendation

The implementation of policies and programs such as peer observations, the Trojan Code, and the school schedule that are driven by the school's core values and beliefs

Commendation

The school's plans to regularly review and revise the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations

Standard 1 Recommendations

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to ensure that the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all classrooms and within all content areas

Recommendation

Include data on individual and school-wide student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations in future reviews of core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations

Standard 2 Indicator 1

Conclusions

While the curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students have meaningful learning experiences, the curriculum only somewhat ensures that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. The school's curriculum documents are thoughtfully written and have many elements that support a strong and varied academic program. However, the curriculum documents have few references to the school's 21st century learning expectations or to any school-wide rubrics to assess them. The Endicott survey indicates that only 62 percent of the staff agrees that the curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations, and this is despite the fact that when the survey was administered, all teachers were expected to use the school-wide rubrics three times in a school year, but this has not been consistently implemented. The curriculum documents do provide essential learning objectives (ELOs) for each subject area, which in many ways capture the spirit of the 21st century learning expectations, but the curriculum is not designed specifically around the 21st century learning expectations. While the program of studies indicates that there are multiple courses across the school that provide learning experiences related to each of the school's 21st century learning expectations, the curriculum documents do not make these same connections. Teachers and department supervisors indicate that PLCs have worked diligently to collect and review data/results to modify and adjust the curriculum on an ongoing basis. The school offers Edmentum's Plato Courseware system (PLATO) as an online delivery system for credit recovery courses in the event that a student needs to complete a specific course requirement in order to graduate. While the SHS curriculum has many elements of a strong curriculum, only when the school's 21st century learning expectations are fully embedded in the curriculum documents will teachers have a curriculum that purposefully connects course content to the school's 21st century learning expectations thus providing a blueprint for planning lessons and units that enhance students' ability to master these expectations.

(Additional Sources: Program of Studies, Curriculum Documents)

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Most of the SHS curriculum is written in a common format that includes the units of study with essential questions, concepts, content and skills, and instructional strategies and assessment practices that sometimes include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics, but does not include the school's 21st century learning expectations. For all Simsbury schools, the curriculum templates are written using an *Understanding by Design (UbD)* format. Every template requires courses to identify the relevant Common Core State Standards, Connecticut State Frameworks, college and career readiness skills, essential learning outcomes (ELOs), essential questions, enduring understandings, knowledge and skills, predictable misunderstandings, assessment plans, and a learning plan with key resources. While each template does not specifically require 21st century learning expectations to be written into the curriculum because these are district-wide documents and those expectations are not designed for other grades, some department supervisors encourage teachers to write these expectations into the "Other Goals" section of the curriculum template. Instructional strategies are often included in a section of the template labeled "Learning Plan and Key Resources", but in some documents this part of the template has not been completed. Assessment strategies that include the use of common assessments are referenced in many curriculum documents, and in some cases common assessment questions are suggested, but the alignment of those common assessments to school-wide analytic rubrics is not present. Other assessment strategies such as lab reports and projects are often included to encourage teachers to allow students to demonstrate their mastery of the ELOs in a variety of ways. The school district devotes time and resources every summer to curriculum revision, which could be used to include explicit connections between the assessment strategies used and the use of school-wide rubrics to measure achievement of the 21st century learning expectations. By reviewing and revising its curricular documents to include 21st century learning expectations and assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic rubrics, the school will be able to provide teachers with an invaluable tool to guide instruction and assessment that is aligned to the school's core values and beliefs.

(Additional Sources: Curriculum Documents)

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- central office personnel

Standard 2 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The curriculum frequently emphasizes inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, and authentic learning opportunities in the school, and occasionally emphasize cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities outside of school, and informed and ethical use of technology. The adoption of a common format based on the *Understanding by Design* model and the use of essential questions are indicative that the curriculum documents are written to foster depth of understanding through inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking skills in all courses and levels. This is particularly notable in the English curriculum, where both level II and honors/AP courses have the same essential questions and common assessments in in the English curriculum, while the mathematics and engineering curriculum documents are particularly notable for emphasizing inquiry and problem solving. The science and engineering departments offer courses from Project Lead the Way, a nationally recognized problem-solving and applications-based curriculum, and the wide array of technology and engineering courses shows a variety of course options that all ask students to persevere to find the answers to complex problems. The embedded assessments in 78 percent of the curriculum documents (not all curriculum documents included embedded assessments) show evidence of performance tasks that asked students to engage in inquiry and higher order thinking. Data from the Endicott survey corroborates the degree to which the school's curriculum emphasizes inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, as 85 percent of students feel that the content of their courses challenges them to think critically and to solve problems, and 88 percent of teachers agree that their departmental curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge. Evidence of authentic learning can be found across all disciplines. For example, ninth grade science students create their own experiments and use graphs to recognize trends and to make predictions based on those trends; physics students create their own projects in which they make a device or conduct a lab and then present the material to other students in a science fair setting. Students in the Introduction to Engineering Design course complete a comprehensive project in which they design, build, test, document, and present a three-dimensional puzzle system. In Accelerated Accounting, students research a new business and prepare a comprehensive chart of accounts for that business. A review of the 48 classes visited during the shadowing of students found that authentic learning opportunities took place in an amazingly high 54 percent of them. While the written curriculum in general does not provide authentic learning opportunities outside the classroom (with the exception of electives in family and consumer sciences and in music), the school provides many opportunities for authentic learning outside of school. For example, ninth grade English students recently attended a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at Hartford Stage; science classes venture outdoors to test water content; physics classes visit the Lake Compounce Amusement Park to measure acceleration; art classes visit the Museum of Modern Art in New York City the Animation and Film class attend an annual field trip to a film festival, and the music department goes to Europe every four years to perform or to experience cultural immersion. The world languages department offers trips to Spain, France, China, Italy and Greece to support authentic learning experiences in Spanish, French, Chinese and Latin classes and has recently begun a partnership with a Spanish-language school in Salamanca, Spain, where SHS students stay with host families and go to language school for two weeks during the summer. All family and consumer science students taking the independent study/internship course participate in one-year internships in human services or child development in district schools, and the school's child development program offers a playschool for pre-school children that is available three days each week for eight weeks. And while the written curriculum does not emphasize the ethical use of technology, the taught curriculum does this successfully, as 89 percent of students report that they are knowledgeable about the ethical use of technology. All students are first educated on the ethical use of technology during the freshmen orientation at the beginning of the school year, and policies relating to the ethical use of technology are included in the library's curriculum and are reinforced through various courses, both through lessons created by the library/media center personnel and through many student projects that are required by individual teachers in courses across the curriculum. In a particularly well-synthesized example, the bioethical themes of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* are investigated in light of the ethical quandaries

revolving around the ethical use of medical technology today. On the other hand, only 56 percent of students report that teachers include topics from other subject areas, and only 57 percent of teachers report that the curriculum emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning. Nevertheless, there are isolated examples of cross-disciplinary learning, most notably Simsbury High School's first-ever venture into offering a truly interdepartmental course (AP Seminar), which is co-taught by the English and social studies departments. Another notable collaboration across two departments has students in an engineering class creating a variety of plastic shapes based on isometric models. These shapes are then printed on a 3D printer and passed to the mathematics department, where students in geometry classes then calculate the surface area and volume of the shapes. Finally, in a recent school-wide initiative around close reading, the English, social studies, science, and physical education departments each taught skills connected to the Common Core Reading Standards grouped by three strand-specific sets (key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas) on a rotating schedule, and each department reinforced earlier instruction given by the previous department. A comprehensive curriculum that includes a focus on depth of understanding, inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning, and authentic learning ensures that students have many opportunities to practice and achieve the 21st century learning expectations.

(Additional Sources: Curriculum Documents)

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 2 Indicator 4

Conclusions

There is to a considerable degree a clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum. According to the Endicott survey, about three-fourths of the teaching staff believe that the written and taught curriculum are aligned. There are many practices in place at SHS that improve the likelihood that teachers are in fact teaching the written curriculum. The use of common assessments and tasks in all courses with a written curriculum ensures that teachers are incorporating the ELOs spelled out in the curriculum for their courses into their lessons. Teachers in each department share a common drive, where they can post and access lessons and other instructional resources and contribute to the alignment of the taught and written curriculum. This indicates a high level of collaboration and alignment among faculty members. In some ways, teachers in their lessons go beyond the written curriculum, as evidenced previously regarding providing authentic learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom and by teaching and promoting the ethical use of technology. Another practice that promotes the alignment between the taught and the written curriculum is that department supervisors, who understandably know the written curriculum better than building administrators, frequently observe classes as part of their job description. Furthermore, the school has instituted peer observations in which groups of teachers in the same department observe their colleagues and provide feedback about the instruction observed. Finally, many teachers attribute the collaborative work done weekly in their PLC meetings has had significant impact on the implementation of a common curriculum. On the other hand, not all teachers consistently engage their students in higher order thinking to the degree indicated in the curriculum documents. Nevertheless, on the whole the many systems and practices the school has in place to influence the alignment of the taught and written curriculum will ensure that that all students at SHS will experience the same purposefully designed curriculum and thereby maximize opportunities for them to receive instruction aligned to school-wide and course-specific learning expectations.

(Additional Source: Curriculum Documents)

Sources of Evidence

- student shadowing
- teachers
- department leaders
- school leadership

Standard 2 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Effective curricular coordination and vertical articulation consciously exist between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district for some academic areas. The district has put in place several structures that support the vertical articulation of the curriculum. For example, the district curriculum review team is a committee comprised of department supervisors, resource teachers in the elementary school, administrators and curriculum coaches from each of the schools whose role is specifically to review curriculum documents to ensure that they follow *UbD* guidelines and align with sets of standards such as the Connecticut Core Standards and the SHS Learning Expectations for College and Career Readiness, to make modifications where appropriate to increase alignment, to facilitate communication between and among the district's elementary, middle, and high schools, and to provide leadership within each content area. The assistant superintendent for curriculum is responsible for the vertical alignment of the curriculum and has charged the department supervisors with creating a five-year plan for curriculum revision. Most curriculum work is done over the summer, and the assistant superintendent for curriculum reviews all summer-created curriculum and grants final approval for the finished products. Teachers have occasionally been allowed to do peer observations in other schools in the district, and the music department in particular has made this an area of focus. PLC vertical teams, particularly in the elective areas, meet to ensure continuity of instruction with the result that most of the redundancy found in the curriculum for different grade levels has been eliminated. Some core curriculum areas have 7-12 curriculum guides. The Algebra I courses in the middle and high schools have some common assessments, as do some middle and high school world languages courses. Within the school, the major work to increase curricular alignment is done during the summer, but the weekly PLC meetings and the monthly department meetings at times address issues involving curricular alignment. Vertical teams in the mathematics and the world languages departments developed curricular on-ramps for students so that they have clear and defined pathways to high school curriculum. The science and social studies departments also have vertical teams. The district has recently allotted significant resources to curriculum revision and most department supervisors have scheduled their own review cycle in conjunction with the district-wide curriculum team. The district's commitment to vertical alignment is cited as a strength among some faculty members and a source of pride for sending school administrators. When full formally documented curriculum alignment is achieved in all academic areas, there will be a clear understanding of the continuum of student learning in the district and how it will culminate in the high school experience.

(Additional Sources: Curriculum Documents)

Sources of Evidence

- teachers
- school board
- department leaders
- central office personnel

Standard 2 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are for the most part sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. According to the board of education, in the 2015-2016 school year 9.4 percent of classes were identified as above the board-determined ideal class size range of 15-25 students for SHS, and 37 percent were identified as falling below this recommendation. Rarely did any class size exceed 27 students. Individual teacher loads do not exceed required levels. The only concern raised with regard to class size or teacher load was the unbalanced distribution of students taking the same course, which is not a staffing issue. The school district allots between \$80,000 and \$100,000 per year for instructional materials at SHS, which has proven to be sufficient to support teachers in delivering the curriculum. According to the Endicott survey, 91 percent of students and 92 percent of parents are satisfied with the instructional materials provided to each class, and department supervisors and teachers generally support this finding. Classrooms are outfitted with document cameras, SMART Board technology, and speakers for providing audio for videos and YouTube clips, and in several departments there are Chromebook carts available. By the 2017-2018 school year, the school plans to have a 1:1 ratio of computers to students for take-home purposes, which will reduce the teacher demand for using the computer labs. The resources of the library/media center (LMC) are clearly adequate to meet the informational needs for implementing the curriculum. The library/media specialists work regularly with classroom teachers to meet their instructional needs and provide students with information concerning the ethical use of technology. Their involvement in curriculum implementation is evident in a review of common assessments in subject areas such as English, social studies, and wellness. In addition, the LMC provides students with access to its 77 desktop computers and 70 Chromebooks. The spacious and well-equipped classrooms support a variety of classroom configurations and student activities, with the only concerns being the need for upgrading the athletic facilities and improving the climate on the third floor on hot days. The school's resources only somewhat support an extensive co-curricular program, as the school has a "pay to play" policy (which funds the provision of equipment, uniforms, referees, and trainers) to participate in sports and some activities such as the school's various musical groups, and these areas also raise additional funds to support their programs. In addition, there had been a concern that some clubs and activities provide teachers with stipends to serve as advisors but others do not, which has been rectified by adding 22 new paid positions. Nevertheless, despite the reliance on monetary contributions from parents and volunteer advising from the teaching staff, SHS has a very vibrant and active co-curricular programming. When staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are completely sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities, the school will be fully prepared to promote its core values of "preparation, passion, and personal development."

(Additional Sources: Curriculum Documents, Board of Education Report)

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school board
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Indicator 7

Conclusions

For the most part, the district provides the school's professional staff sufficient personnel, time and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. Curriculum work for the high school generally is done in the summer and is organized and determined by the department supervisors with input from individual faculty members within each department. The department supervisors then determine the number of faculty members needed to accomplish the desired revisions and seek approval and funding from the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. The majority of department supervisors indicate that they generally receive positive responses and adequate funding for their plans for curriculum revision, which is largely a result of the annual allotment of \$50,000 to \$75,000 that is dedicated to curriculum development. Upon approval for the curriculum work to be done, department supervisors will then solicit teachers to participate in the summer curriculum writing, for which they are compensated per the teacher contract. All curriculum is revised through attendance and participation at the summer curriculum institute and is subsequently approved at the district level. The Endicott survey indicates that 78 percent of the faculty believe they are directly involved in curriculum evaluation, review, and revision work, and data supports this claim. In 2013, 30 SHS teachers participated in summer curriculum work; in 2014 and 2015, these numbers increased to 54 and 56 teachers, respectively. Teachers, department supervisors, and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning all report that ongoing curricular revision is occurring at the department level. Curriculum revisions are largely informed by current research regarding topics such as *UbD*, flipping the classroom, and implementing standards; reviews of student work; and data from common assessments. While the ongoing nature of the curriculum revision process makes it challenging to maintain fully updated curriculum documents, it does ensure that the curriculum is regularly revised in response to student needs, and the central office administration plans to develop a database to house a regularly updated school curriculum in a centralized location. For the most part, SHS professional staff have sufficient personnel, time and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research which results in a document that accurately reflects the learning desires of the school community, and when the curriculum documents contain all recent revisions for all stakeholders to view, these documents will better inform the instruction taking place in the classrooms.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teachers
- department leaders
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 2 Commendations

Commendation

The purposeful design of the curriculum in a common *Understanding by Design* format that includes many components necessary to promote student learning

Commendation

The emphasis on inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, and authentic learning experiences in most of the written curriculum

Commendation

The collaboration between the English and social studies departments in creating the AP Seminar curriculum

Commendation

The systems and practices in place that are able to ensure a close alignment between the taught and the written curriculum

Commendation

The many coordinated efforts at vertically aligning the curriculum

Commendation

The ongoing and collaborative curriculum revision process that is informed by assessment data and current research and is well-supported by the district

Commendation

The high degree to which the school's staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, instructional supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center support the delivery of the curriculum across SHS classrooms

Standard 2 Recommendations

Recommendation

Embed the school's 21st century learning expectations throughout the SHS curriculum

Recommendation

Include the use of school-wide rubrics with the assessment strategies delineated across the curriculum

Recommendation

Increase opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning across the curriculum

Recommendation

Formally integrate the ethical use of technology into the appropriate curriculum documents

Recommendation

Ensure that revisions to the curriculum are regularly updated in the school's formal curriculum

Standard 3 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are often extensively examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. Almost all teachers are familiar with the school's identified beliefs about learning which are posted along with the school's 21st learning expectations in every classroom and are visible throughout the building. Simsbury High School (SHS) has crafted a core values and beliefs brochure which states that the school strives to "implement teaching methods designed to promote both critical thinking and creativity and to engage students in shared ownership for learning." In about three-quarters of classroom observations, teachers implemented at least one of the following strategies: group activities, self-directed learning, inquiry, or problem solving. Teachers regularly examine instructional practices with other teachers during the weekly professional learning community (PLC) meeting time and during school and department faculty meetings. Teachers are expected to perform three peer observations within their departments, with most departments focusing on an agreed upon area of growth, thereby, ensuring that each PLC member will have observed all members of their PLC at least once by the end of the year. Teachers also report that they have many other opportunities to analyze current practices, refine and build new skills, share ideas, teach one another, conduct classroom research, and/or examine problems of practice to effective instructional strategies that positively impact student learning. Teachers are asked to reflect on their record of practice through questions such as "How can I measure the effectiveness of the professional learning in which I have been engaging throughout the year?", "What has been the impact on student learning?", and "In what ways did I improve my teaching this year?" that are recorded on a peer observation worksheet designed to help facilitate professional conversations during PLCs. While a few teachers report that the process is more observational and less critical, they agree that they use their common planning time to share and discuss what instructional strategies they think are effective. For teachers who do not teach courses common to other teachers, in lieu of the regular PLC meetings, the school provides monthly opportunities to meet in vertical teams to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. When all teachers continuously reflect on their teaching through the lens of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations, they will develop and implement instructional practices that are most effective in supporting student achievement of the school's 21st learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Indicator 2

Conclusions

In all areas, teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by sometimes personalizing instruction, occasionally engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning, often engaging students as active learners that are sometimes self-directed, frequently emphasizing inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, frequently integrating the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, sometimes engaging students in self-assessment and reflection, and by regularly integrating technology.

According to the Endicott Survey, 88 percent of teachers report that they personalize instruction to support the achievement of the school's learning expectations but only 31 percent of students agree, although students also report that 69 percent of them are given opportunities to choose topics for some assignments. Teachers state that one way they personalize instruction is by grouping students by reading or by skill level. For example, in an Algebra 1 class, the teacher may vary the pacing of a lesson and/or level of assignment expectations; for example, the teacher may use two variations of a worksheet on adding and subtracting signed numbers, with one version having students add rational numbers and the other limiting the problems to integers. In business and finance courses students examine their own personal career plans and develop a budget to plan for future expenses. Teachers follow 504 Plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to ensure that identified students receive instruction that is designed specifically for that student. However, classroom observations indicate that personalization of learning occurs in about only 40% of classrooms on any given day, and as part of the school's Two-Year Targeted Plan, the school is planning to Investigate ways to increase personalization of, and faculty members from the Social Studies and English departments have attended training on ways to better incorporate personalization in everyday practice.

There are many examples in which the school provides opportunities to engage students in cross-disciplinary learning. French teachers take students to a museum to study French Impressionism and meet with a guest artist who taught the techniques of French Impressionists. Physics teachers have students participate in a yearly physics fair in which they must design a product and then build it using skills such as carpentry skills learned in the woodshop class to demonstrate their understanding of physics concepts. Geometry teachers incorporate 3D printing in their course which helps deepen understanding of mathematical concepts while introducing design and engineering possibilities to students. Some students report having to connect material learned in English classes to concepts from US History or to current political events. However, classroom observations indicate that typically teachers make cross-disciplinary connections in about 19% of SHS classes and teachers report that they rarely have time to collaborate across departments to plan interdisciplinary activities.

SHS teachers frequently engage students as active participants in the learning process. Students were actively engaged in 75 percent of the 48 classes visited during the shadowing of students, and in 35 percent of these classes students were engaged as self-directed learners at least part of the time. Some courses offered at SHS are structured to be self-directed, such as an engineering design and development class (electrathon car), a manufacturing class in which students design, manufacture, and sell their products, a music class in which seniors direct a one-act play, and a Computer Science Principles class, in which students create an application that solves an everyday problem. SHS has developed a student learning cluster document that suggests certain activities outside of the classroom in which students can participate to extend their learning. Several senior students report that ninth and tenth grade classes were more teacher-directed while upper level courses allowed for more freedom be self-directed.

The Endicott Survey also reports that 93 percent of teachers believe that they emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking to support the achievement of the school's learning expectations and 81

percent of parents feel that their student's teacher emphasized learning, problem-solving and higher order thinking. For example, in Physics labs are designed to be open-ended and students must generate their own questions as a crucial piece of the investigation. In Geometry, as an end-of-the-curriculum assignment students examine the shapes of food cans, discuss the space they take up on the shelf, and evaluate their design. Classroom observations indicate that higher order thinking and problem-solving is emphasized in about one-half of the classes on a typical day. In the classes visited during the shadowing of students, 40% of teachers engaged students in inquiry and 38% of teachers engaged them in problem-solving and higher order thinking to support the achievement of the school's learning expectations.

Most teachers integrate the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. In Life Skills, students are given the opportunity to apply learning in an internship, in the Auto Shop course, students diagnose problems, order parts and fix cars, and in a French class, students negotiate the purchases of hotel rooms, plane and train tickets, and ordering meals. In a science class, students explore a scenario involving the possibility of terrorists obtaining radioactive material and constructing a dirty bomb to apply their understanding of the concept of half-life, and in sociology, students fact-check the presidential debates to discern actual facts from rhetorical statements and the deceptive use of data. Fifty-three percent of students who participated in the Endicott Survey reported that their teachers provided opportunities to apply what he/she is learning outside the classroom, but this statistic probably underestimates the frequency in which students are engaged in authentic tasks. During the shadowing of students, in 26 of 48 classes the teacher integrated the application of knowledge and skills to authentic tasks, a very high percentage for a one-day snapshot.

Many classes ask students to reflect and self-assess frequently, and according to the Endicott Survey, 73 percent of students believe that teachers provide them with opportunities to assess their work. In Life Skills, students continuously work on their social skills and are asked to keep a behavior chart where they are asked to put a check, zero or minus mark under the day, and in an English class, students use the school's preparation and participation rubric to reflect on their work habits for the day. In a geometry class, students are asked to re-evaluate their work to determine where errors were made, in an art class, students are regularly able to self-critique, peer coach, and peer critique their work, while students in a French class are expected to generate a SMART goal every quarter pertaining to any academic aspect. However, classroom observations indicate that on a given day only 21 percent of teachers engaged students in self-assessment and reflection.

Virtually all teachers make use of the available technology in their classrooms, and 88 percent of students reported on the Endicott Survey that their teachers ask them to use technology in their assignments. Most classrooms have a Chromebook cart. Many teachers report that they use technology to provide real-time feedback to students through a variety of digital quiz software (Quizlet, Kahoot, Edmodo). Teachers in the math department use graphing calculators to support inquiry-based learning, and teachers in the science department use Probeware and other data collection technology. Across all disciplines, students present information to both teachers and their peers using a variety of technology platforms, including Google Slides, Prezi, PowerPoint, and iMovie. On a typical day, about three-fourths of all classes 75% make some use of technology. However, in most core content classrooms, technology is used mostly on a substitution level (direct tool substitute with little to no functional change, such as using PowerPoint instead of writing on the board or assigning a writing assignment using Google Docs to replace a pen/pencil writing assignment) rather than on a redefinition level (allowing for the creation of a new task, where it may have previously been inconceivable, such as having students create a multimedia presentation as a tool for persuasion rather than having students write a persuasive essay). Teachers often express their frustrations with connectivity issues on both the network and wireless that inhibit their ability to deliver the lesson that they have designed.

When teachers personalize instruction; engage students in cross-disciplinary learning, as active and self-directed learners, and in self-assessment and reflection; emphasize inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking; apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks; and integrate technology, student opportunities to achieve both course-specific goals and the school's 21st century standards are maximized.

When teachers emphasize inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking, engage students as active and

self-directed learners, integrate the application of knowledge and skills to authentic task, and use technology in instruction, students are often developing 21st century skills; when teachers can further engage students by regularly personalizing instruction and frequently engaging students in cross-disciplinary learning and in self-assessment and reflection, student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations will be fully supported.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 3 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by sometimes using formative assessments, especially during instructional time; by occasionally strategically differentiating within the classroom; by frequently and purposefully organizing group learning activities; and by sometimes providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom.

Teachers use a variety of formative assessments to inform their instruction. For example, teachers in the art department use exit slips and peer and self-assessments, and in physics classes, teachers use pre-assessments that they have termed “prelabs” to assess readiness to write formal labs. In other classes, students are asked to record responses on hand-held whiteboards to check mastery of vocabulary or specific skills or indicate levels of understanding through a low-tech “thumbs up/thumbs down approach and high-tech online tools like Kahoot to get an overview of class understanding of a crucial concept. Some math teachers use “Problem of the Day” or a daily warm-up activity to assess student readiness to learn a new concept or skill, while the chorus teacher uses “Solfege Lab” during instructional time to measure student progress. However, it is not always clear that teachers use these formative assessment strategies to make immediate adjustments to planned instruction within a given class., as sometimes instead teachers use results from quizzes or tests to reflect upon changes that they will make when teaching the same course the following year. Teachers do employ a variety of formative assessment strategies, and in the 48 classes visited during the student shadowing process, teachers use formative assessment 52% of the of the time in some way.

While 78% of teachers report that they use differentiated instructional practices to meet the learning needs of all students, this was not supported by data from classroom visits, as teachers were observed differentiating their instruction in a low percentage of the time. Teachers were observed using a variety of instructional strategies to deliver instruction, and Endicott survey data indicates that 66% of students agree that teachers use a wide variety of teaching strategies in their lessons. However, there are limited examples of teachers differentiating their instruction. In a co-taught World Civilization 2 course, the two teachers differentiate their instruction by using multimedia (video), alternative textbooks, providing notes for students when needed, and alternative assignments (multiple choice, true false, fill in the blank). Students in some Spanish classes can choose how to demonstrate their learning; possibilities include Power Point presentations, Prezi, songs, poems, play dough sculptures, or paintings. In geometry, students work in homogeneous jigsaw groups to discover properties of quadrilaterals, and then they recombine in heterogeneous groups to engage in peer instruction. Some teachers report that they would like some professional development on techniques for differentiating instruction

Students have frequent opportunities to cooperate with their peers to engage in classroom activities that contribute to attaining lesson objectives. Ninety-two percent of students report that teachers use group learning activities in a purposeful way. Teachers in 48% of classes visited in the process of shadowing students used some form of cooperative learning within the class period to ensure that students have opportunities to collaborate on projects, engage in discussions initiated by prompts or scenarios provided by the teacher, conduct investigations through the inquiry process, or work together to solve problems. World Language classes develop speaking and listening skills through the frequent use of pairing and small group activities and lab work in many in science is collaborative. Additionally, many teachers in all disciplines, use “Think-Pair-Share” and small group work for student processing and participation.

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Although teachers state that they provide additional support and alternative strategies within the classroom, this was observed in less than a third of the classes visited during the shadowing of students. However, both students and parents indicate that teachers are available to provide additional support and alternative strategies before, during, and after school. In addition, the school provides multiple academic support centers throughout the building including the Student Assistance Center, Math lab, Writing Lab, and science support is available every period of the day in a designated classroom. Teachers from the English, Social Studies, Wellness, Science and World Language departments post research packets online to support students who struggle to find information on their own. Many departments use online resources such as ClassZone (Social Studies), Quizlet (English), Khan Academy (Math), Quia (World Language) and PLATO Learning Environment (Science) to provide additional support and alternatives strategies for learning, and most of these online resources can be supported by Google Read and Write. The Math Department consistently uses “flipped classroom” videos to help students learn and reinforce concepts at home.

When teachers adjust their instructional practices by using formative assessment, especially during instructional time, strategically differentiating, purposefully organizing group activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies, the percentage of students meeting their learning targets will increase.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Most teachers, individually and collaboratively, regularly improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments; by examining student work; by engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice; and sometimes improve their instructional practices by using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, and supervisors (but rarely parents) and by examining current research.

According to the Endicott survey, 87 percent of teachers report that they improve their instructional practices by using student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. Many of Simsbury High School teachers use some of their PLC time to analyze results on common assessments to inform discussions about instruction; also, teachers use student achievement data to establish goals for student learning outcomes for the year when writing their Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) as part of the teacher evaluation process. Teachers also use results collected from both a variety of online tools and from common assessments and chapter quizzes to improve their instructional practices. For example, within the English department, teachers administer baseline writing and grammar assessments at the beginning of the year and adjust their instruction based on these results, such as when they use resources like NoRedInk.com and Kahn Academy to support students whom they have identified as needing to master specific grammar skills; teachers of wellness changed the way feedback was given after reviewing the 10th grade decision-making model.

Additionally, 89 percent of teachers report that they have formal opportunities to examine student work to improve their instructional practices. For example, Biology teachers collaboratively grade student work from a common assessment to look at common student errors in the writing of scientific conclusions and then use their findings to modify instruction for those same students. In the technical education and engineering department, teachers examine student work to ensure that they are preparing students to fill future job openings and meet the needs of the job market. Also, in an automotive class the teacher video records students going through the automotive fault diagnosis and examines the videos to determine evidence of students' ability to problem solve.

Professional discourse about instructional practice is an integral part of the school culture, as all teachers participate in a PLC where discourse is an essential element. During much of both departmental meeting time and professional development time, teachers are formally engaged in professional discourse, and 86 percent of teachers report that they improve their instructional practices by engaging in formal opportunities for professional discourse. All teachers have formal opportunities to use peer feedback through the recent peer observation initiative in which all teachers partake. SHS had employed a literacy coach for a 3-year period, who provided teachers with information about the Common Core Reading Standards and provided coaching to teachers on how to improve the teaching of reading. Many teachers also state that they use student feedback from the SHS teacher evaluation survey or one of their own surveys at mid-year or end of the year, and some use technology such as the Google Classroom question feature or the website polleverywhere.com to elicit student feedback. But according to the Endicott survey, only 35 percent of students report that teachers ask for their ideas/opinions on how to improve their teaching, although for upperclassmen this percentage increases. Thus, the school identified in its self-study a desire for SHS to solicit more feedback from freshmen and sophomores. While parents recognize that administrators at SHS seek their feedback on a variety of topics, only 14% of them agree that their children's teachers ask them for feedback about their instructional practices. Supervisors at SHS provide a great deal of feedback through the teacher evaluation process, particularly regarding Teaching Standard Rubric #3, that often results in improved instructional practice. Additionally, groups of administrators and supervisors conduct instructional rounds several times per year during which they visit classrooms to collect data on a specific area of instruction. Teachers receive feedback on the data collected and may use it to set instructional goals for the following year.

To assist teachers in keeping up with current research on instructional practices, SHS uses whole faculty meeting, department meetings, and professional development days to inform them about current testing and state and national standards. The social studies, English, and math departments supervisors recently received training from the College Board about the new SAT and used this information to discuss with teachers how changes in the test could impact instruction. The library/media center has a professional section for teachers that is stocked with books on topics such as instructional and assessment strategies and the differentiation of instruction. Many teachers participate in week-long summer workshops and discuss their experiences both formally and informally with their peers.

When teachers use a wide variety of data and feedback sources, examine student work and current research, and engage in professional discourse focused on instructional practice, they gain a wealth of information that will have a significant impact on the improvement of instruction and consequently on the improvement of student achievement.

Sources of Evidence

- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Simsbury High School teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. According to the Endicott survey, 88.6 percent of students feel that their teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach, and 96 percent of teachers report that they maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. About 92 percent of teachers hold an advanced degree, including the 20 percent who hold seventh year certifications and another 31 percent who hold sixth year certifications. Additionally, many teachers at SHS have participated in week-long College Board AP seminars, participate in summer curriculum work and/or participate in cross-cultural exchange and travel opportunities; teachers in the Project Lead the Way program receive two weeks of mandatory training so that they can become certified to teach this curriculum. World languages teachers regularly collaborate with teachers in their foreign partner schools and participate in regional and national conferences where they have presented effective instructional strategies for teaching world languages classes. The career and technical department supervisor, who teaches an Intro to Engineering and Design course, participated in an externship that allowed her to re-align her curriculum and instruction based on industry standards. The district offers many professional development activities that focus on instructional improvements, including a full day each November involving the use of technology in which teachers select from a variety of options and which has resulted in some teachers implementing Google Read & Write, many teachers across the curriculum implementing close reading strategies, and some teachers using Kahoot to better engage students in reviewing skills and concepts. SHS teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, model the virtue of self-directed, lifelong learning for their students, and by maintaining expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices, they are able keep current on both relevant information in their field and on best practices to prepare better lessons for their students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

Standard 3 Commendations

Commendation

The many formal opportunities provided by SHS for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices

Commendation

The frequency with which teachers engage students in authentic tasks which allow them to apply the skills and concepts they have learned

Commendation

The overall emphasis on inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking in most SHS classes

Commendation

The use of student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments, the examination of student work, the feedback from supervisors, and the regular engagement in professional discourse to improve instructional practices

Commendation

The efforts of SHS teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, to maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices

Standard 3 Recommendations

Recommendation

Increase opportunities for teachers to personalize instruction and to engage students in cross-disciplinary learning and in self-assessment

Recommendation

Increase the use of formative assessment for the purpose of making same-day or next-day adjustments in instruction when warranted

Recommendation

Design and implement a plan to expand the use of differentiated instructional practices, including but not limited to, the varying of time, content, and degree of support and scaffolding, based on students' pre-assessed skills and conceptual understanding

Standard 4 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The professional staff at Simsbury High School (SHS) does not yet continuously employ a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations based on specific and measurable criteria for success, such as school-wide analytical rubrics. While all teachers at SHS regularly assess individual student progress in their classes using course- and department-specific rubrics, the use of school-wide rubrics is not yet systematic. From 2007-2009, student progress towards the 21st century learning expectations as measured by school-wide analytic rubrics was communicated to students and parents through the Simsbury Information Management System (SIMS) data program. Students were given a “report card” of their progress toward achieving mastery of the 21st century learning expectations along with traditional letter grades. Community interest in this report was lower than expected, and therefore the practice was discontinued in 2009. In 2013-2014, Simsbury High School revised its school-wide rubrics to reflect their core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. These eight rubrics—which set up criteria in the areas of reading complex texts, developing writing skills, constructing arguments, solving problems and showing perseverance, conducting short and sustained research, evaluating work of self and others, using technology strategically and responsibly, and demonstrating personal responsibility—clearly outline the high expectations the school has for its students. In 2014-2015, teachers were required to use these school-wide rubrics three times during the year to measure student achievement of the 21st century learning expectations. There is no evidence to show that teachers ever used the rubrics to assess individual or school-wide achievement in a formal manner, and furthermore, the three-times-a-year requirement for the use of these rubrics was discontinued in the 2015-2016 school year. However, 71 percent of teachers in the Endicott survey state that they have used the school-wide analytic rubrics when assessing student work. Many teachers use course- or department-specific rubrics to assess student work and to give students feedback on their performance of course-specific skills, many of which align to the school's 21st century learning expectations. Student work samples also support the extensive use of rubrics by many teachers, but usually not the school-wide rubrics. The school has as part of its Two-Year Targeted Plan the goal of ensuring consistency in the process of using school-wide rubrics to measure 21st century learning expectations. Only when the professional staff continuously employs a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations will it be able to determine the degree to which SHS students are achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student work
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The SHS professional staff does not communicate either individual progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students and their families, nor does it communicate whole-school progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations to the school community. The Simsbury Information Management (SIMS) data program was used from 2007-2009 to record student progress toward achieving the 21st century learning expectations that were measured using the school-wide rubrics that existed at that time. Students were given a "report card" describing their progress toward achieving mastery of these skills (including traditional grades), but this practice was discontinued in 2009 because of the declining community interest in this particular report. The school renewed its interest in tracking and reporting 21st century skills in 2014, requiring teachers to measure student success in achieving the 21st century learning expectations three times during the school year with the intention of analyzing student data and reporting progress to students, their families, and the school community, but this initiative also did not take firm root in the policies or practices of the professional staff. The school recognizes the need to move forward with this goal and has included in its Two-Year Targeted Plan the goal of creating and implementing a formal process for collecting and reporting individual student progress in meeting 21st century learning expectations to both students and parents. When the school accomplishes this goal, all members of the school community will be able to monitor individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Additional source: Two-Year Targeted Plan

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- teacher interview
- school leadership

Standard 4 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The professional staff of SHS regularly collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. The Endicott survey states that 72 percent of teachers use data to respond to inequities in student achievement, and teachers throughout the building reflect on student achievement on common tasks and assessments in their PLCs. These groups of teachers meet weekly and often use their 42-minute meeting to examine student work and achievement. PLC collaboration frequently results in the development of common assessments and alternative assessments to address achievement inequities. Teachers also use this data and the surrounding discussion to discuss possible tier 1 interventions, and to determine whether to recommend students to receive extra help from the math lab, science help center, the English and social studies resource center, or the writing center. Further, teachers and staff have used results from various standardized tests (Connecticut Mastery Test [CMT], Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium [SBAC] and Degrees of Reading Power [DRP]) to help with placement and to determine what additional supports incoming 9th grade students may need. In addition, data studied by the PLCs has led to changes in curriculum and instructional practices. In all core classes, such data has been used to rewrite formative and summative assessments including end-of-course assessments. Data has also helped teachers determine when to re-teach concepts or create new lessons to help students achieve success. While the work performed by the PLCs has been positive, there is more work to be done, and the principal reports that addressing the inequities in student achievement is a high-priority item. He will be working with professional staff and other stakeholders to study performance data and to find ways to bridge achievement gaps. When the professional staff regularly collects, disaggregates, and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement, teachers will be able to adjust teaching and assessment to help close learning gaps.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 4 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Prior to each unit of study, many teachers communicate to students the unit-specific learning goals to be assessed but only a few teachers explicitly communicate the 21st century learning expectations to be assessed. According to the Endicott survey, 64 percent of students and 64 percent of staff members report that teachers explain what the learning expectations are before each unit of study. Each unit has essential questions and targeted skills that are spelled out in the curriculum, and teachers communicate these essential questions at the beginning and throughout each unit by posting the essential questions on classroom walls and/or teacher websites, by including them in syllabi distributed to students, by displaying them on the board, by printing them on student assignments, and by communicating them through class discussions. English teachers use written unit introductions that explain the essential questions of the unit they are about to begin, and math teachers tell students what concepts they should understand and what procedures they should be able to perform by the end of a unit. The school's *Program of Studies* states that "within the Simsbury High School curriculum, students are expected to demonstrate understanding of each course's Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) and which of the school's 21st century learning expectations each listed class will measure during the year." When teachers communicate corresponding 21st century learning expectations and unit-related content specifications to students prior to each unit of study, students will be better able to understand the themes and big ideas of that unit and will be able to make the connections between the units of study and the 21st century learning expectations.

Additional source: curriculum documents, program of studies book

Sources of Evidence

- student shadowing
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 4 Indicator 5

Conclusions

Prior to summative assessments, most teachers provide students with specific and measurable criteria for success, such as corresponding rubrics, which define targeted high levels of achievement. Per the Endicott survey, 84 percent of students report that teachers use rubrics to assess work, and 77 percent of them feel that they understand the rubrics their teachers use. Teachers often give students analytic rubrics before summative assessments and explain what students need to do to be successful on those assessments, and students corroborate this. Most of these rubrics are course-specific, particularly in the AP classes, and some of the rubrics are departmental. Examples can also be found in which teachers use school-wide rubrics. Interviews of math and science teachers indicate that they sometimes use the school's rubric for the 21st century skill of "problem solving and persistence." In chemistry, for example, students were provided rubrics adapted from the school-wide rubric for "making sense of problems and perseverance" before solving a series of electromagnetic problems and being assessed on their ability to analyze, plan, implement, and evaluate the problem-solving process. In an English speech project assessment, the rubric for the task is included in the directions for the speech assignment, so students are aware of the complexity of the project and the specific writing, persuasion, research, and public speaking skills that they were expected to demonstrate. Students in Wellness II practice the 21st century skill of "evaluating the work of self and others" by providing peer feedback on final projects. Some teachers also encourage student success by providing exemplars such as sample essays, sample lab reports, successful physics projects, and sample art pieces before students are asked to perform a task themselves. By providing course-specific, departmental, and school-wide rubrics prior to summative assessments, teachers assure that students will be able understand what is expected of them and thus can be better prepared to successfully complete those assessments.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 4 Indicator 6

Conclusions

In each unit of study, virtually all teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. According to the Endicott survey, 97 percent of teachers report using formative, summative, and other assessment strategies in the classroom regularly. Much of the school's written curriculum includes suggestions for formative and summative assessments in each unit. While many teachers use common formative assessments and discuss the results on them as an important part of their work in PLCs, many also use more informal formative assessment strategies. In a social studies class, students are asked to discuss with a partner in a "Think-Pair-Share" activity whether they would prefer to be a male or female citizen in Ancient Sparta, and the teacher listens in on these discussions to assess their understanding of the ancient civilization and ultimately their understanding of cultural differences. More formally, in preparation for a geometry midterm exam, students are asked to make a flipped video based on one of the previously learned topics to help their peers review that topic, which gives the teacher valuable information on the students' preparedness for the exam so that they can be addressed as part of the exam review. In an AP Literature class, students complete a chart in which they list evidence from the text that supports a theme statement, which shows their ability to recognize that theme throughout the course of the text they read. Students in a 9th grade French II class complete an in-class activity in which they watch an episode of a French TV series and use the vocabulary from their unit to describe one of the character's traits and actions in an informally written paragraph. In 9th grade physical education, students are asked to provide daily examples of how their classmates use the "coopetition" themes during several units leading up to benchmark assessments. A Spanish teacher uses "white board" paddles so students can write quick answers to questions and hold them up to get instant feedback on whether they identified a word correctly. Some teachers use exit and entrance slips, graphic organizers, and journals to assess their understanding of a particular concept or skill and then provide students with timely and specific feedback based upon these entries or responses as part of their daily routine. These formative assessments give students and teachers feedback about progress and readiness for a summative assessment or before moving onto the next unit. Teachers also use summative assessments that can take a variety of forms such as essays, tests, projects, labs, performances, midterm exams, and end-of-course assessments. As a result of teachers' varying method for assessing student learning, students have many ways to show their achievement of course ELOs and the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Teachers at Simsbury High School collaborate regularly in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. According to the Endicott survey, 93 percent of teachers agree that they meet formally to discuss and improve both formative and summative assessment strategies. Teachers agree that their professional learning communities (PLCs) provide them with weekly opportunities for collaboration. Recently the school conducted an internal survey to evaluate the PLC process, and the survey found that about three-fourths of teachers discuss summative assessments and about two-thirds of them discuss formative assessments in their PLCs. Examples of assessment-related work done during the PLCs includes writing common summative assessments within content areas, discussing the methods used to conduct and assess formative assessments, and using school-wide rubrics. For example, to assess student knowledge and understanding of poetry, ninth grade English teachers have generated a poetry project that requires students to create a group presentation in which they analyze and explain a poem, and follow this up with a writing assessment in which each student individually discusses that same poem. After this assessment was first administered, the teachers in their PLC discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment and made changes to better reflect the knowledge and skills taught in the unit. In Geometry, teachers include several common questions on an end-of-the-unit test, discuss student performance on these questions, and make any necessary revisions to these questions based on student performance. Science teachers use PLC time to write common assessments and to coordinate their lab tasks and to create and discuss the types of formative assessments that show student understanding of the lab work. All teachers teaching the same courses are required to give a common end-of-course assessment, and evidence points that this is a universal practice. Even in singleton classes, some teachers collaborate with other members of their department to ensure that student assessment from one year to the next is vertically articulated. For example, the choral teacher compares the assessments she used with those of the middle school teachers to ensure that students can demonstrate growth from year to year. The collaborative development and implementation of common course assessments helps ensure that student achievement of course-specific and school-wide learning expectations are measured with consistency within departments and that assessment results are used to impact revisions in both curriculum and instructional practices.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 8

Conclusions

Teachers at Simsbury High School often provide timely feedback that is sometimes specific and corrective to ensure students revise and improve their work. Almost two-thirds of parents and almost two-thirds of students surveyed agree that teachers provide timely feedback that is useful to students. Many students report that they receive timely feedback on their work through technologies such as comments made on Google Docs and review games such as Kahoot. Teachers also use classroom time to have students peer edit or receive feedback from both the teacher and other students. For example, in a chorus class the teacher listens to each student sing and provides immediate suggestions on techniques to help each student reach difficult pitches. In an architecture class students use an architectural software program and projector to present their building plans to the class, after which each student receives constructive feedback from the teacher and from other students in the class. In some student work, teachers provide targeted feedback either directly through the rubric used to assess the work or through handwritten comments that suggests ways in which students can improve their work. For example, on a paper about good and evil in the *Lord of the Flies*, the teacher wrote specific comments such as, "Explain further – is Jack jealous? Why?" and "Need a conclusion here tied to thesis." On a chemistry test, a teacher had written notes on different ways an equation could be written with the intent that the student would review the work and retake the test. However, other students work samples do not indicate that any targeted feedback was provided to help the student revise or learn from the student work, although some had generic comments such as "excellent" or "nice job." The school does not have a policy about making up tests or revising assignments, but many teachers allow students to revise written assignments, and some teachers allow students to retake tests on which they perform poorly. For example, in an AP Chemistry class, over the past two years students have been able to review tests that they have taken with the teacher either individually or in small groups before and after school, after which they then are retested on the material at a scheduled time. During those last two years the percentage of AP test scores in the desired range of 3-5 has risen from 60 percent to 94 percent, and the teacher attributes these increases from the improved learning that has resulted from allowing students to improve their test grades through retakes. A different process has been used in the Early College Experience University of Connecticut course titled Human Development and Family Studies. In this course, the students are offered the opportunity to make test corrections for which they write a quote from their text to back-up their revised answers, and students in this course also have one-on-one meetings with the teacher three times per quarter to ensure that they are making progress with their self-chosen, quarter-long projects. When students have regular opportunities to revise and improve their work with the assistance of specific, timely, and corrective feedback, more students will take advantage of that feedback and will increase their opportunities to achieve course-specific and school-wide learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- department leaders
- Endicott survey

Standard 4 Indicator 9

Conclusions

Many teachers use formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. The Endicott survey indicates that 85 percent of students, 83 percent of staff, and 71 percent of parents agree that teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning to revise curriculum and improve instructional practice. Teachers across the school use formative assessments to check for understanding and inform instruction. In physical education, the development of a fitness lab has enabled the gym teachers to work individually with students to address student needs based on their strengths and weaknesses as informally assessed during gym classes and as formally assessed during fitness tests. Science stated strongly that PLC time was invaluable in allowing teachers to discuss student work including formative assessments and that they use this information to discuss new ways of approaching material. The choral program uses an MP3 audio recording of a sight singing assignment early in the year as a formative assessment and then again later as a summative assessment. The teacher used one-on-one instruction to improve each student's skills based on this formative assessment. An AP Literature quiz is designed to check for understanding so that the teachers can best prepare the students for the AP exam. Teachers of Spanish assess their students to determine if students can read and paraphrase the information and ideas they have read in their own words, and the results from these assessments are analyzed in a PLC to ascertain whether mistakes that are made stem from issues involving reading comprehension or issues related to vocabulary mastery for the purpose of planning instruction that addresses their findings. AP Psychology mini-studies are used in preparation for larger research projects and end-of-course assessments. Although interviews of teachers indicate that 83 percent of them explained that they used assessment to inform instruction, in many cases these explanations involved what the teacher would do differently the next time that topic was taught, which is clearly valuable information but does not address the immediate needs of students who are struggling. This observation is supported by data collected from the shadowing of students, in which 52 percent of teachers in the 48 classes visited used formative assessment strategies to adjust their lesson. In the language labs, teachers can personalize the instruction that students receive based on their ability to complete various tasks in virtual language practice sessions. Students and parents note that not all departments are adjusting the instructional pace or instructional practices in response to student performance on formative assessments, and some of them voiced the opinion that some departments feel locked into covering a certain amount of curriculum at a specified pace to be able to give the assigned summative assessment at the scheduled time. Although they acknowledge that the school provides extra-help labs in the school for all core subjects, they would prefer that some of the remediation occurs in the classroom, especially where many students failed to achieve the learning objectives that had been taught. When all teachers use formative assessment data and student feedback to adapt their instruction practices within lessons or prior to summative assessments, more students will achieve the learning expectations measured by these assessments.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- teachers
- department leaders
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice, extensively using data from student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, standardized assessments, and data from sending schools; occasionally using data from receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions; but do not use survey data from current students and alumni or from individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Endicott survey data indicates that 89 percent of staff members agree that they have formal opportunities to examine student work to improve their instructional practices, and 93 percent of staff members agree that they meet formally to discuss and improve formative and summative assessment strategies. During some of the weekly PLC meetings, teachers examine student work to evaluate and, if needed, revise assessments and to make instructional adjustments. As part of the teacher evaluation process, supervisors regularly review student work and results from school-wide and course-specific assessments to make inferences about instructional practices. Teachers in common courses all use common assessments at least one time per quarter and on the final examinations (EOCAs).

The data from standardized assessments are analyzed and successfully used to inform curriculum decisions and instructional practices. For example, mathematics teachers have examined the newly designed SAT math section and made curriculum changes to ensure that students are sufficiently prepared to succeed on this assessment, and English teachers use the results from the SAT reading and writing sections to inform decisions about curriculum and instruction. Ninth and tenth grade science teachers use PLC time to make curricular and instructional adjustments to align their courses to the expectations of the CAPT test with the result that Simsbury High School currently has the highest CAPT science scores in Connecticut.

The school has only recently begun to use data from sending schools, as math, science, family and consumer science, and music teachers are beginning to access student data from middle school files to hold articulation meetings with some of the middle school teachers. The school compiles an annual list showing the colleges at which students are matriculating, and there is data compiled showing that students are graduating from these schools at a better than 90 percent rate. While the school has some data from post-secondary schools, it has not yet developed a process to survey alumni to obtain data that could inform its assessment practices.

While the school does not collect data showing either individual or school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations, many school departments use data collected from common assessments related to the ELOs, which are closely related to the 21st century learning expectations, to inform curricular changes.

Only when teachers and administrators use data sources that include individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations and surveys from current students and alumni will the school be able to take advantage of the full range of information necessary to most effectively revise curriculum and instructional practices at Simsbury High School.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study

- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- student work
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Indicator 11

Conclusions

At Simsbury High School, grading and reporting practices are occasionally reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. With one of the school's core values, "preparation," there has been a growing concern at SHS that students are faced with too many summative assessments which affects the students' ability to prepare for these assessments and also often places too much stress on students. This is especially true at the end of the school year, when some students are taking standardized tests such as the SAT, the ACT, and various AP exams along with end-of-course assessments, and other high-stake tests. In 2015, the Simsbury School District addressed this concern by creating the Simsbury Assessment Think Tank (SATT) using grant money. The SATT is made up of 34 teachers who worked to address concerns of parents, teachers, students, and administrators regarding assessment practices. Students and parents agree that one of the benefits of the SATT has been a new policy that states that students may request a rescheduling of tests if they have more than two of them scheduled on any given day, although some teachers have observed that some students may be reluctant to ask for this adjustment. Another outcome resulting from the SATT is the process of examining the impact of an EOCA that is currently 20 percent of the final grade along with the requirement that 50 percent of an EOCA would be some type of project or performance task, which also aligns to the belief that students need to be able to apply what they learn. Another example of a change in policy affects how the grade point average (GPA) is calculated. Previously the school used a 20-point scale for determining the GPA, but this scale was difficult to understand and difficult to communicate to colleges, so the school formed a committee consisting of five teachers, seven students, four parents, two board members, seven administrators, and one community member. As a result, the school switched to a 4-point scale that weighted grades based on course level. This made it impossible for a student in a level III mathematics class to obtain a 4.0 GPA, which the school believed did not align to the school's values of challenging oneself and allowing for individual differences at the same time. The new system being implemented adds another tier so that students in level III math can attain a GPA of 4.0 by earning an "A" and at the same time students are encouraged to challenge themselves as they prepare for college by taking more difficult AP classes by earning a "B" in an AP class worth 4.0 points. At a departmental level, department supervisors are responsible for collecting course expectation sheets from each teacher, which are then reviewed to ensure that grading policies are implemented correctly. Department supervisors are also expected to review the distribution of grades that teachers awarded students and to look for any irregularities that may indicate a departure from the school's values. Parents of students with grades in the "D/F" range are notified by their teachers at the end of a grading period and all families have access to grades online through the school's PowerSchool web access. However, the school does not have a regularly scheduled review of grading practices. A regular review of grading and reporting policies and practices at Simsbury High School will ensure that these policies and practices are in line with the school's core values and beliefs.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 4 Commendations

Commendation

The regular use of course- and department-specific rubrics to assess individual student progress in achieving course-based learning objectives and ELOs

Commendation

The regular opportunities provided by the weekly PLC meetings that allow teachers to collaborate on assessments and assessments strategies and to analyze assessment data

Commendation

The many ways through which teachers communicate to students the unit-specific learning goals to be assessed and with specific and measurable criteria for success

Commendation

The wide range of both formative and summative assessment strategies used across the school by SHS teachers

Commendation

The use of common assessments in all courses taught by more than one teacher to ensure that student achievement of course-specific and school-wide learning expectations are measured with consistency within departments and that assessment results are used to impact revisions in curriculum and instructional practices

Commendation

The extensive use of data from student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, and standardized assessments, to revise curriculum and to improve instructional practice

Commendation

The creation and implementation of the Simsbury Assessment Think Tank (SATT) to study the effects of testing on students and to help determine what summative assessments are essential while helping to control student stress

Standard 4 Recommendations

Recommendation

Revisit and implement a formal process to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning skills using the school-wide analytic rubrics

Recommendation

Communicate whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations once a formal process is in place to measure that progress

Recommendation

Design and implement a plan to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement

Recommendation

Ensure that all teachers provide targeted feedback that will allow students to understand how to improve their performance and provide students with more opportunities to improve their work

Recommendation

Increase the use of formative assessment to make timely adjustments to instruction prior to summative assessments

Recommendation

Include the use of survey data from current students and alumni and achievement data on individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instructional practice

Recommendation

Establish and implement a process for regularly reviewing grading and reporting policies and practices at Simsbury High School to ensure that these policies and practices are in line with the school's core values and beliefs

Standard 5 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Simsbury High School consciously and continuously builds a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive school culture that fosters student responsibility for learning resulting in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. The positive school culture is fostered through multiple avenues including, but not limited to, strong administrative leadership, a committed and engaged faculty and staff, clear and defined expectations outlined in the Trojan Code, a clean and bright school building, and a wide range of deliberate support programming intended to meet student needs. As a result, most students take pride, ownership, and responsibility in the school. The SHS community shows a purposeful and pervasive commitment to the school's core values of preparation, passion, and personal growth, and the majority of students and staff can explain these core values and how they create a respectful and supportive school. The Trojan Code and core values encourage students to act in ways that are honorable, respectful, and responsible; they are taught and reinforced throughout the school community. The Trojan Code committee meets regularly to collect data, analyze data, and report their findings to the faculty. Over half of teachers (56 percent) report that the Trojan Code has improved the atmosphere of the classroom and work setting, and 85% of respondents say that the school feels "very positive" or "somewhat positive." In the Trojan Code committee's report of four-year trends from 2014-2015, the total number of referrals decreased by about 50 percent. Over a three-year span discipline referrals were reduced from 3,000 to just over 700 referrals. While the three largest problem behaviors have remained the same (class cut, inappropriate use of technology, and class disruption), the number of cuts decreased by about 55 percent. Most referrals still occur at 7:30 in the morning but have decreased by about 50 percent. Referrals are now evenly distributed throughout the week, and the number of referrals on the peak day decreased by about 55 percent. Thirty-two percent fewer students received 10 referrals or more. Even though 86.7 percent of staff and 89.5 percent of parents believe that the school provides a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive school culture, only 44.6 percent of students state that students respect one another. Ninety-eight percent of parents and 89 percent of staff agree that students assume responsibility for their learning and set high expectations for themselves. In the 2014-2015 school year, SHS offered 23 AP courses to students; 479 students took 946 AP exams, and 79 percent of the scores were 3 or better. Most students actively participate in the school community through clubs, athletics, and school leadership teams. Students contribute to the overall upkeep of the school. Students have brightened many areas with artwork and murals as well as contributed to the landscaping of outdoor areas such as the school courtyard, vegetable garden, and lunch areas resulting in a feeling of connectedness to other members of the school community including the school principal who was both an initiator and a hands-on participant with the students in the courtyard beautification. Building facilities also foster a supportive and safe community for all people. The school recently designated three single-stall gender neutral bathrooms available for use by students and staff after students presented their concerns for LGBTQ students at SHS. Due to the safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture created by all members of the SHS community, the school fosters an environment where students can take responsibility for their learning, and develop a shared ownership and pride in their school, which enhances their efforts to achieve high expectations and the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- teachers
- students

- parents
- department leaders
- school leadership
- school support staff
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 2

Conclusions

Simsbury High School is largely an equitable and inclusive community ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that some courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. There is a high probability that students will be enrolled in at least one truly heterogeneously grouped core course throughout their high school career, but this is not guaranteed. Both Civics and Financial Literacy are core courses that are heterogeneously grouped and likely to be taken by most students. However, students may fulfill the civics requirement by taking an Advanced Placement (AP) course and there are several ways to fulfill the school's financial literacy requirement without taking the quarter-long Financial Literacy course, with the result that these two courses are not purely heterogeneous. Nevertheless, the school has many other courses that are heterogeneously grouped, including a wide variety of elective courses and the physical education and wellness classes taken by all students in the ninth through eleventh grades. In an attempt to increase heterogeneity in most core classes, SHS has reduced the number of levels of most core courses to two levels, namely, level I (AP or honors) and level II (competitive college preparatory). A third level (college preparatory) remains only in some mathematics courses. The program of studies lists each level of any given course; any course for which the levels are not provided is heterogeneously grouped. The reduction in levels has created some controversy at SHS. Even though teachers, students, parents, and administrators all state that students are provided ample opportunity to challenge themselves academically, many parents, teachers, and students have expressed strong reservations about the removal of the honors level for any course that is offered at the AP level I. The concern is that many high achieving juniors and seniors are either "forced" to take all AP courses in order to assure a challenging classroom experience or to take level II courses in subjects such as senior English and sophomore, junior, and senior social studies. Although recommendations about course level are made by teachers, students have the opportunity to override these recommendations and enroll in the level of their choice. SHS also has a number of co-curricular programs that include students of all abilities, interests, and backgrounds and are flexible to different students' needs. For example, Best Buddies focuses on developing one-on-one friendships between typically developing students and students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and both the Unified Sports® and Unified Theater programs facilitate inclusion through arts and athletics and give all students the opportunity to learn from one another. Students with significant special needs are also included seamlessly with typical students in school-wide activities such as daily lunches and the occasional school beautification projects. While Simsbury High School is in many ways equitable and inclusive and offers access to challenging academic experiences, when the school community fully commits to fostering heterogeneity while providing challenging academic experiences for all students, it will better prepare all of its students for the very diverse world its graduates will be entering.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Simsbury High School has a formal, ongoing program through which each student has an adult in the school, in addition to the school counselor, who knows the student well and assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. This program, known to the school community as SHS Connect, was created in response to a recommendation from the previous NEASC ten-year review and was originally organized by grade level (grades nine through eleven only) and within that grade level by alphabetical order with the intention of building meaningful relationships between teachers and students in an informal, safe, and relaxed environment. A committee of teachers designed the activities to be used during the weekly time allotted to this program. However, in response to the Endicott survey data which reports that only 45 percent of students agree that "my school has a program which provides me with an adult in the school, in addition to my guidance counselor, with whom I meet regularly and who knows me well," and only 59 percent of teachers agree that "I actively participate as an advisor/mentor to personalize each student's educational experience," the school decided to review and redesign its advisory program. In an effort to improve the effectiveness of the SHS Connect program, teachers on the school culture task force made SHS Connect the focus of their meeting time during the 2015-2016 school year. Beginning in the fall of 2016, the SHS Connect program was reorganized using the criterion of a common interest such as gaming, animal rights, and movies rather than by grade level. The program meets for 20 minutes each Wednesday and Thursday and now includes the entire student body. The advisor/advisee ratio is about 1:12, and teachers develop activities based on the identified common area of interest. However, some students report that they are placed in areas that they have no interest in and others state that although they are in an area of interest, the students and teachers are not engaging in meaningful conversation. Many faculty members express that the extensive extracurricular offerings at the school from arts to athletics as well as clubs and leaderships programs provide additional opportunities for adult members of the school community to get to know students well by serving as club advisors, coaches, theatre directors, and much more. A vast majority of students polled report that they do have at least one adult in the building other than a guidance counselor whom they can turn to when they need support. As SHS continues to revise and implement its advisory program to more effectively meet student needs, every student will be able to benefit from the opportunity to have an adult in the school who is working to know them well and to assist them in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- panel presentation
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school leadership
- Endicott survey

Standard 5 Indicator 4

Conclusions

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff of SHS regularly engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, dedicate formal time in school to implement some professional development, and apply some skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Simsbury Public Schools has a district-wide calendar that includes planned professional development (PD) dates and meeting times that includes six half days and two full days. Perhaps the most valued of these PD opportunities is the full day devoted across the district to improve teacher knowledge concerning technology that can enhance teaching and learning. This past year, over 50 district teachers along with an outside expert conducted workshops for other teachers about ways that technology can assist them with their teaching or about how they can enhance their technology skills. Some professional development activities throughout the year are organized by department. Outside experts are periodically invited into the building to share their expertise with SHS faculty members. For example, the music department received extensive PD on the newly revised National Core Arts Standards, the mathematics department collaborated on ways to implement a flipped classroom model, the science department supervisor used department meeting time to have teachers examine the new Next-Generation Science Standards, and the school counseling department regularly gathers to update and modify its curriculum and delivery of service. The faculty is also divided into small professional learning communities (PLCs) within departments that meet weekly for 42 minutes to discuss instructional and assessment strategies related to a particular course that they teach in common. PLC survey data from April 2016 provides insight into what teachers say they actually discuss in PLC meetings with the top three discussed topics including “the content matter you teach” (93 percent), “specific instructional practices” (85 percent), and “common summative assessments” (75 percent). Some teachers self-report using PLC time to reflect on their instructional practices, other PLCs devoted this time to collaboratively prepare lessons, and still others to create and analyze formative assessments and the data they produced. This designated PLC time has come to be valued by most teachers as an opportunity to collaborate over content, as fully 94 percent of the teachers report through the Endicott survey that PLCs “are clearly and directly related to the improvement of instructional practice and the cultivation of student learning.” All teachers engage in reflection during the evaluation process as they review and analyze their student learning objectives (SLOs) and achievement based on their indicators of academic growth and development (IAGDs). During the 2015-2016 school year, the SHS administration implemented across the school two different peer observation protocols. One of the protocols engaged teachers within their PLCs in peer observations in which two of the teachers on a PLC observe the third teacher instruct a class and provide feedback that was focused on a particular area of interest predetermined by the teacher being observed. For example, a teacher might request that the two teachers observing the class provide feedback on how well a cooperative learning activity contributed to achieving the learning target of the lesson, which could lead to a professional conversation on which actions and strategies used by the teacher contributed to the success of the activity and what changes the teacher could implement to make the activity even more effective. All teachers were expected to participate in these peer observations. The second protocol used by the school was completely different in both structure and purpose. Teams of department supervisors and administrators conducted walk-throughs to gather classroom data on a particular “problem of practice,” examined the information gathered, and collaborated to discuss next steps. To assist new faculty members in their development, the school has a formal mentoring program that offers support and opportunities for peer observation and reflection in order to improve professional practice. Teachers periodically engage in conversations about specific practices or current educational research disseminated by department supervisors or district administrators. Furthermore, SHS has a process to review individual requests from teachers to participate in outside professional development opportunities, but outcomes from those requests are varied with some teachers stating that these requests are always granted while others claim that they are rarely granted. New teachers participate in an extensive three-day orientation program before school and work closely with a mentor known as a “building buddy”. This non-

evaluative mentorship helps new teachers plan out the first two weeks of the school year, learn SHS-specific policies and provides a safe space for reflection. Many teachers say they want more content-specific professional development and/or express the need for PD specifically devoted to providing differentiated instruction in high school classrooms. Thus, while SHS has many opportunities for the principal and professional staff to engage in professional discourse and to dedicate time to implement professional development and apply skills, practices, and ideas gained in order to improve curriculum, instruction and assessment, when the school provides more opportunities for PD centered on teacher-identified areas of need, more teachers will receive the targeted professional development they need to improve both teaching and learning.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 5

Conclusions

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus on improved student learning. The district worked the entire 2014-2015 school year through a team of teachers, administrators, and staff within the Professional Growth and Evaluation Committee (PGE) to develop a teacher evaluation program that would both align with current research and state goals, yet still be as close to Simsbury's core values as possible. This committee was co-chaired by the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, who is widely considered a state leader on teacher evaluation, and by a teacher-leader and union representative. The resulting product is modeled on the Connecticut's System for Educator Evaluation and Development (2014 SEED). Simsbury's evaluation process identifies three lanes, with lane #1 designed for first and second year teachers and previously tenured teachers, lane #2 for accomplished and exemplary teachers, and lane #3 for teachers rated a below standard or developing. Teachers are evaluated through a formal goal setting process. The teacher evaluation documents include four categories of evaluation. For Category I teachers focus on goals derived from the Simsbury Public Schools Teaching Standards. These standards include Instruction, Planning, Assessment, Content Knowledge, Learning Environment, Professionalism, and Collaboration. Teachers select, with the assistance of their evaluators, two areas of focus from these standards. In Category II the principal selects "a stake-holder feedback" goal, which is the same for every teacher and is based on feedback data from parents, students, and teachers. In Category III teachers develop two Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for the year, one being an independent goal and the other being a collaborative goal within the PLC. These SLOs must be supported by SMART goals and backed up by data. Category IV includes a whole-school learning indicator, which is developed by the administrative team. As part of their final evaluation teachers are also rated on the 7 Simsbury Public Schools Teaching Standards through the use of analytic rubrics that were designed by the PGE committee for each standard. Teachers are assigned to both a primary and secondary evaluator. One of the four building administrators serves as the primary evaluator and the teacher's department supervisor serves as the secondary evaluator. All teachers meet with their supervisor and administrator three times a year following a tightly scripted agenda created by the PGE. At the first meeting, which must be conducted by October 30th, the teacher presents yearly goals for discussion and approval. The second meeting, held between December 1 and February 15, focuses on reviewing mid-year performance toward each goal, and the final meeting, conducted by June 15th, includes final ratings with a summative review of teacher practice and a reflection of performance related to their goals. As part of the evaluation process, SHS teachers are also observed three times per year. Teachers in lane #1 and lane #3 have one formal observation and 2 informal or formal observations. Teachers in lane #2 are required to have one classroom observation each year and two other observations which may be informal classroom observations or a review of practice. A review of practice would include observations of a PLC, presentation or committee work, or it could be a review of student work, teacher websites, or grading practices in power school. Teachers in Lane #2 are placed on a three a three year cycle in which their classroom observation is formal once every three years. All formal observations include pre- and post-observation meetings between the teacher and the evaluator, with documentation produced from each meeting. All evaluators participate in regular professional development and calibration discussions conducted by the district. Teachers generally report satisfaction with the evaluation system with 72 percent reporting through the Endicott survey that "input from supervisors who are responsible for evaluating my teaching plays an important role in improving my instructional practices." Through the faithful implementation of the research-based evaluation system, the opportunity for educators to develop and grow professionally will ultimately improve instructional quality and thereby improve achievement outcomes for all students.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The organization of time extensively supports research-based instruction, professional collaboration among teachers, and the learning needs of all students. Through a creative and flexible schedule, Simsbury High School teachers and other professional staff members participate in professional learning communities (PLCs) and effectively use 42 minutes per week during the school day to support student learning through these PLCs. The school has created and implemented a modified block schedule that emanates from its core values of passion, preparation and personal growth. The schedule includes two days per week of extended blocks, which provide opportunities for a variety of activities that promote inquiry and higher order thinking to emphasize depth of understanding and include time allotted to its student advisory program. Three days with eight 42-minute blocks provide students extra flexibility in picking classes to prepare them for their future and choose electives that allow them to pursue their passions. One of the two days with long blocks allows teachers an opportunity to meet weekly in their PLCs, thus assisting them to grow professionally and to focus on improving achievement for students who are struggling. The district has created rubrics for its PLCs to ensure that they focus on "Dialogue, Decision-making, Action, and Evaluation" (DDAE) and require them to record meeting minutes to be shared after each meeting. During the PLC blocks, teachers sometimes create common formative and summative assessments, review student performance on these assessments, and align the curriculum to meet the learning needs of all students. These assessments are used to identify students who are in need of additional tier 1 support or tier 2 interventions such as scheduled time in the math or writing labs. One scheduling challenge in the PLC structure is that teachers with multiple courses are assigned to join one PLC for the year, and are thus limited to reviewing the minutes for any other PLCs for courses that they teach. The schedule also enables the recently implemented peer observations in which every teacher visits the classrooms of their PLC peers three times per year. Host teachers complete a form detailing the focus area and context of the lesson as well as the most valuable areas for desired feedback. Visiting teachers complete a peer observation worksheet and then employ a specific protocol as they deliver feedback in a follow-up session with school administrators scheduling substitutes for teachers who need coverage for peer visits. The scheduling of six early release days in addition to monthly faculty meetings and monthly department meetings provide numerous opportunities for formal professional development. The school also makes adjustments to its schedule when these adjustments are aligned to its core values. For example, teachers recently requested that the school change its practice of scheduling early release days on the Friday before a long weekend as this resulted in reduced student attendance and focus on those days, and the school revised this practice effective for the 2016-2017 school year. As a result of a school schedule that establishes scheduling priorities based on its core value and beliefs, the school has developed a master schedule that best serves the learning needs of its students.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 7

Conclusions

Student load and class size usually enable teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of students. The board of education (BOE) has established class size guidelines to promote class sizes that allow teachers to meet the learning needs of all students, and these guidelines are instrumental in determining staffing within the given departments. For example, the BOE has determined that all level I and level II classes should have a range of 21 to 25 students with an average class size of 23 and has allowed the school to build class sizes of 18-22 for all courses that do not have a third level. Most of the classes that are currently offered at SHS fall within these recommended class size guidelines. For the 2015-2016 school year the average number of students in level I, level II, and PE/health classes was 23 students, while the average number of students in level III classes was only 14 students. Fifty-four classes, or only nine percent of all classes, exceeded the upper range limits delineated in the class size guidelines, and most of these classes surpassed the desired limit by only one or two students, and usually the higher class sizes occur in AP courses as historically some students elect to drop to a lower level course part of the way into the school year. The math department had the most classes above the class size guidelines. Fourteen of the 113 teachers at SHS had two or more classes above the recommended range limits, but, on the other hand, 37 percent of all classes fell below the desired range limit. Some teachers feel that the BOE guidelines should be revised in consideration of the increased academic diversity of many classes that has resulted from the reduction of course levels, and the data suggests that it might be possible to reduce the number of classes above and below the range with a more equitable distribution of students. When all class sizes and student loads are sufficiently small for teachers to meet the learning needs of all of their students, the likelihood that struggling students will be able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations is increased.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- teacher interview
- teachers
- school board
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 5 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The principal, working with other building leaders, consistently provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The core values of preparation, passion, and personal growth are promoted through the instructional leadership of the principal and other building leaders. The principal regularly references the core values in his weekly communications with the school community and made these values the central focus of his graduation speech in 2015-2016. To promote "preparation," the principal and other leaders further a culture of collaboration and reflection across the faculty that is accomplished through PLCs, peer observations, ongoing curriculum work, and a consistent focus on student performance. The principal and other school leaders have established a culture of high expectations where a majority of students take control of their own learning. The principal and department supervisors also promote preparation and goal setting through the PGP process and by working directly with teachers on the creation and implementation of Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) for each course. To promote student passion, the principal and other leaders challenge students to get actively involved in sports, clubs and activities and also encourage students to create a club if one does not currently exist. Students are also encouraged to pursue their interests when choosing from the wide range of elective courses offered at SHS. To promote personal growth, the principal and other leaders crafted the Trojan Code initiative, which has set appropriate behavioral expectations and rewards aligned to the values of respect, responsibility, and honor. The principal has also empowered a teacher committee to re-examine the SHS Connect advisory program for the purpose of making the program more effective in assisting students with their personal growth. For teachers, the principal has implemented the school-wide practice of peer observations to engage them in assisting each other in promoting professional growth. The principal has attempted to limit the number of initiatives but to implement each initiative with fidelity, and thus participation in the peer observation process is an expectation for every teacher in the building. Evidence of the effective focus of the principal and his administrative staff on providing strong instructional leadership can be found in the Endicott survey, which reports that 82 percent of faculty members and 87 percent of parents agree that "the principal and other school-based administrators provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations." Because the principal and the building administrators provide effective leadership with a focus on teaching and learning that is based on the school's core values and beliefs about learning, the school is better able to promote these values and to implement any changes necessary to improve its educational program.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 9

Conclusions

At Simsbury High School teachers, students, and parents are consistently involved in meaningful and defined roles in decision making that promote responsibility and ownership within the SHS community. The current principal models administrative accessibility and an openness to feedback from students, parents, and teachers. The principal states that students take their leadership roles seriously in the building. It was students from the GSA who brought up issues of students gender/sexual identity, presented issues to staff, and helped develop a plan to make one single-stall bathroom on each floor gender-neutral and available for any student. Students also asked for a place to go first thing in the morning to work on and print homework resulting in the earlier open time for the school's writing lab. Students also advocated for the addition of water fountains resulting in their installation. In a more formal capacity students have an opportunity to have their voice heard as part of the student council, which is comprised of approximately 40 students representing the four classes. The student council's influence in the school ranges from working with the athletic director in developing the Trojan Leadership Academy to meeting with the head of food services in an effort to bring back healthy choices that students were requesting at lunch, and much more. The student-parent-teacher council (SPTC) promotes the welfare of the high school community through the cooperation and efforts of students, parents/guardians, and faculty. This organization is open to all stakeholders in the school community and meets monthly throughout the year. The SPTC helps to raise money and to organize special events throughout the year. Parents also report that beyond the SPTC there are two positions held by parents on the the school's leadership team, a standing committee assigned to complete tasks regarding the school community and comprised of nine appointed faculty members, three administrators, nine students, one staff member, two parents, and two board of education members. Parents report the lines of communication between parents and administration and parents and teachers are open and faculty and staff are available to discuss student needs if necessary. Parents noted their opinions are valued and solicited often. While various student/parent clubs and committees provide opportunities for student and parental involvement and collaboration within the SHS community, these clubs and committees do not constitute a part of formal decision-making processes. Teachers report they do have a voice in the decision-making process with building-level administration, and that their concerns are shared at the district level. Teachers expressed that although their opinions are often solicited, they do not always feel their feedback is given consideration. Some teachers admitted that they no longer accept invitations to participate in hiring meetings as they feel their feedback is ignored. Teachers, students, and parents are also routinely involved in the hiring process of teachers and administrators. For example, teacher applicants are asked to teach demo lessons; feedback from the students is sought and taken into account. For administrative hires such as athletic director, assistant principal, director of guidance, and principal, focus groups are created to seek input as to what stakeholders' desire in a candidate. Usually the hiring committee consists of department supervisors, teachers, and sometimes parents and/or students. All segments of the school community are given an opportunity to participate and have their voices heard. However, many contributors are unaware of how their input is used or whether it is of value, and so some feel less eager to share ideas. When the the formal system for gathering meaningful input from teachers, students, and parents is expanded to include feedback on how their input affects outcomes, all participants will feel they have shared in a meaningful and defined decision-making process that promotes responsibility and ownership.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study

- teachers
- parents
- school leadership

Standard 5 Indicator 10

Conclusions

Many Simsbury High School teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. Some teachers have leadership responsibilities as department supervisors, club advisors, and athletic coaches. In general, teachers at SHS are more apt to offer solutions to concerns rather than to lament any problems the school might face. Teachers and administrators collectively support the implementation of common collaborative time for teachers and staff in the form of PLCs. Teachers also lead and comprise the school culture task force focused on school climate and issues negatively affecting school climate. Recently, this task force was instrumental in designing the new SHS Connect model. Teachers are regularly given the opportunity to develop and create elective courses and initiate new co-curricular activities. In the last few years, one member of the English department created two film study courses, the theatre director created several theater courses, and one of the art teachers is currently designing a fashion course. The implementation of AP Physics 1 and 2 was driven by two teachers in the science department, and the school provided time for the teachers to develop the curriculum for this course. Other examples of teacher leadership include the Trojan Code committee, which promotes positive student behavior; the New Teacher Academy, in which veteran teachers present to and mentor newly hired teachers; the NEASC self-study committees; the 2015-2016 district-level assessment think tank, which evaluated the number of formative and summative assessments taken by students each year; and the district PGE, which developed, implemented, and revised the district's evaluation system for teachers. Additionally, several teachers have presented at state and regional conferences related to their field. For example, an SHS mathematics teacher recently presented a course she has been piloting at a state conference. Also, teachers lead in curriculum writing and revision projects every summer. Teachers often conduct workshops for the district-led professional development sessions and some teachers have received training to become Google-certified teachers. Students and parents report that teachers' active engagement in leading other school initiatives is widespread throughout SHS and that many teachers demonstrate their commitment to improve students' academic opportunities and achievement by their willingness to work with students before and after school. Because teachers at SHS have multiple opportunities to demonstrate leadership in formal and informal ways, the result is a significant and positive impact on school improvement, student engagement, and learning.

Sources of Evidence

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

Standard 5 Indicator 11

Conclusions

The school board, superintendent, and principal are frequently collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The superintendent and the principal actively participate in school board meetings by reporting on developments within their jurisdiction, including policies that are designed to assist students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. In addition, they serve on the administrative council that also includes the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, and principals and assistant principals of other district schools, which meets twice each month to discuss topics such as issues involving teaching and learning and student scores on state tests. The Principal's Annual Report to the BOE includes data on student performance, enrollment trends, budget information, new course offerings, and the principal's vision, all which assist the principal in crafting the Continuous Improvement Plan for the school. After listening to this report, the BOE and the superintendent ask clarifying questions, offer constructive feedback, and offer their support. The superintendent meets regularly with the principal, and both the principal and the superintendent report separately that they have an excellent professional relationship. The creation of both the core values statement and the school's 21st century learning expectations themselves in part are the result of this effective collaboration, as the principal-led leadership team that crafted these documents sought the feedback and ultimately the approval of the BOE and the superintendent. Faculty members recognize the value of this relationship with 80 percent of them agreeing that the school board, superintendent, and principal collaborate in the process of achieving the school's learning expectations. As a result of the collaborative and constructive relationships among the principal, the superintendent, and the BOE, the school has valuable partners in the quest to ensure that all students achieve its 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 5 Indicator 12

Conclusions

The board of education and superintendent consistently provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The BOE has consistently supported the SHS leadership model, which gives the principal both decision-making authority and the freedom to include other stakeholders in formulating policy. Through this leadership model, the principal builds the school budget with input from faculty, department supervisors, the building and grounds managers, the director of athletics and student activities, and various other stakeholders and participates with the rest of the district's administrative team to create the PD calendar and to craft agendas for meetings with the high school faculty. In addition, the principal makes policy and planning decisions with input from the SHS leadership team, which consists of the principal, assistant principals, teachers, students, parents and members of the BOE. Members of the BOE indicate that they are not professional educators and define their role as hiring high quality educators to fill key positions and then supporting these leaders to do the jobs that they were hired to do. They also express the view that by the time anything reaches the BOE, it has been vetted extensively by multiple stakeholders. The board of education has not reduced a superintendent's recommended budget in recent memory, and the superintendent and school board members have recently worked hard to establish a collaborative working relationship with the board of finance (BOF), which has led to more constructive negotiations with the BOF and to more support for school budgets from town leaders. When the principal has had to make reductions in his annual budget, he is given the autonomy to make these reductions as he sees fit. By providing the principal with the autonomy to lead Simsbury High School, the BOE ensures that the principal can make the major decisions impacting the educational program in accordance with the school's core values and beliefs.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- students
- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership

Standard 5 Commendations

Commendation

The supportive school culture that fosters student responsibility for learning resulting in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all

Commendation

The recent collaborations between students and the building leadership to beautify the school courtyard and to establish gender-neutral bathrooms

Commendation

The Best Buddies, Unified Sports, and Unified Arts programs for promoting positive relationships among typically developing students and students with intellectual and emotional disabilities

Commendation

The faculty-led efforts to revise the SHS Connect program to make it more effective in providing students with adults other than school counselors to assist them in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The two-pronged peer observation program that empowers teachers to examine their classroom practices with formal feedback from their peers and enables the school to gather important information vital in addressing specific problems of practice

Commendation

The design and implementation of a tiered system for teacher evaluation that has assisted many teachers in the improvement of their instructional practices

Commendation

The design and implementation of a school schedule that is driven by the school's core values and beliefs

Commendation

The establishment of the Trojan Code for effectively promoting student responsibility and for dramatically reducing negative student behaviors

Commendation

The instructional leadership provided by the principal and building administrators that is rooted in the school's core values and beliefs

Commendation

The many ways in which Simsbury High School teachers exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning

The degree to which the school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

The board of education and superintendent for consistently providing the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school

Standard 5 Recommendations

Recommendation

Continue to search for and implement different ways to improve the respect students have for one another

Recommendation

Develop and implement a plan to communicate the value of promoting heterogeneity through reducing the number of levels and to resolve any issues that arise from the reduction of levels

Recommendation

Continue to evaluate and revise if necessary the SHS Connect program to ensure its maximum effectiveness in assisting each individual student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Explore ways to reduce the number of classes above the maximum class size guidelines and to reduce disparities among class sections of the same subject

Recommendation

Communicate to all members of the school community how their input or feedback is valued and used in the decision-making process

Standard 6 Indicator 1

Conclusions

Simsbury High School (SHS) has timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, that support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. An extensive student support team including a school social worker, transition/support coordinator, guidance counselors, nurses, special educators, teachers, and tutors make a concerted effort to address the various needs of the students. All students are assigned to school counselors, who make connections with their students through planned developmental guidance group meetings and through working directly with individual students. In addition, counselors are directly involved in intervention discussions and decision making for their students. SHS also has three school psychologists and a school social worker, who have responsibilities connected with the identification and the support of students with academic, social, and emotional needs from both regular and special education programs. SHS faculty and staff refer struggling students to the student intervention team (SIT) where individual case histories and data including attendance, achievement, and disciplinary records are analyzed and discussed, and action steps are recommended for implementation. If the student continues to demonstrate difficulty in achieving success after the recommended steps have been taken and the team believes a disability exists, it makes a pupil placement team (PPT) referral to determine if special education services are warranted. SHS follows a three-tiered pyramid of intervention and supports in accord with its Response to Intervention (RTI) program. Tier One interventions are utilized at the classroom/teacher level and include classroom accommodations and/or modifications, differentiated instruction, and proactive support for identified at-risk students transitioning from the middle school managed and delivered by the transition/support coordinator in collaboration with the student support personnel. The expectation is that all teachers attempt classroom interventions (accommodations and/or modifications) and document those interventions as needed. Tier Two and Tier Three interventions provide more targeted and individualized support beyond the classroom to students who are still struggling after Tier One interventions have been implemented. A variety of support programs are available to any struggling students regardless of their special education status. These include the student achievement center (SAC) which focuses on supporting students in work completion, student learning, behavioral support and building on their attachment and connection to school. Students are assigned to the SAC in place of a study hall. The SAC is one of the primary support centers for entering 9th graders who benefit from the structure and support available. Additionally, upperclassmen who have been assigned in the past will often return to work on school assignments, preferring the comfort and support their connection with the program has provided in the past. The Academic Basic Skills Tutoring program targets students who have been identified due to weaker performances on the 7th and 8th grade Connecticut Mastery Tasks (CMTs), Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), and Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) in both math and ELA. Other standardized tests are also utilized in identifying students that require individualized support in order to meet the academic demands of SHS. Regular education students who are struggling in their courses can access support with Basic Skills personnel either by recommendation or by request from a variety of sources such as SIT, PPT, parents, teachers, and counselors. The English and social studies writing resource center (ERC) and the math lab provide targeted and individualized support each period throughout the school day delivered by a certified English teacher or by volunteer peer tutors and by rotating certified mathematics teachers and tutors respectively. Students can voluntarily drop in to either center or be referred to one or both of the centers by faculty and support staff members. The science help center, which offers a drop-in opportunity for students seeking extra help in science and is staffed by SHS science teachers in the various science content areas, is held in different teachers' classrooms throughout the day; the schedule of locations and times is posted in every science classroom. The homework club, under the direction of the transition/support coordinator, works specifically with groups of eight to twelve students who are identified as needing daily homework support. The program runs after school from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday. The Pathways program is a Tier Three intervention targeting the needs of the school's most struggling learners. This substantially separate program, available to students in grades 10-12, offers a more personalized and supportive educational program

to ensure access to learning for those students who have become disengaged from the educational process and are at most risk of dropping out. The goals of the program include the development of values, self-discipline, work habits, and academic and life skills needed to achieve success. Pathways serves both regular and special education students who are struggling with mental health, behavioral and/or academic issues and, in the 2015-2016 school year, Pathways served 14 students. The School Avoidance program, another Tier Three intervention, targets students who are having significant difficulty attending school. This program is individualized to meet each student's needs with significant support from the school social worker, school psychologist, special education teacher coupled with strong family and therapeutic connections. School support personnel have strong connections with local youth serving agencies for referral and further treatment. Students who are behind in credits are able to make them up online classes through PLATO learning both during the academic year and the summer. A range of direct and support services are available to identified special education students and students with 504 plans. The nursing staff provides a range of direct, preventive, and emergency services to all students. Students report that support for their needs, both academic and personal, is readily available through the student support services. The school's timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, enable those students most at-risk to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- parents
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school consistently provides extensive information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. Support staff members utilize both technology and face-to-face communication to inform families regarding student support services. Both the district and the school maintain websites that provide links to athletics, library media center, school counseling, health services, extracurricular activities, parent resources, nutrition services, department level resources and teacher websites. A transition/support coordinator, who works with middle school students, analyzes the list of all students moving up to the high school to identify areas of needs and deficits that may require additional supports so that the school can implement student support services in a more timely and efficient manner. This data analysis allows the transition/support coordinator to make targeted recommendations to parents about the types of services their students may need, including but not limited to, math lab, writing lab, tutoring, and English language learners (ELL). Once students are at the high school, support staff are able to track students' progress through PowerSchool, plan programs, and meet with parents to discuss options for moving students into supports as needs arise. In addition, as school personnel become aware of specific needs (academic, social emotional, or physical), they initiate contact, especially for those most in need, through email and/or phone calls to make further resources available to parent/guardians. For those students and parents with no computers at home, and/or language barriers, the support staff calls or send letters home. They also meet in person with parents and provide translators as needed. When addressing the needs of Basic Skills students, communication is handled mainly by phone. There is a school expectation for all support staff members to reach out to parents, especially to parents of students who are earning D's and F's. These parents are encouraged to communicate with support staff frequently to encourage home support of student learning.

The school also provides support service personnel for the Choice program which offers students from Hartford, CT the opportunity to attend the Simsbury Public School System through a lottery system. The coordinator meets with parents and students to communicate program benefits, requirements, and assist with any necessary communication between home and school. In addition, the school has a counselor who has all of the students from the A Better Chance Program (ABC) on their caseload. The ABC program is non-profit organization in Simsbury that services academically talented young men of color from under-served communities nation wide. The school counselor assists in the rigorous selection process of these students and serves as a liaison to the board members, resident directors, academic advisors, resident tutor, and host families.

Support staff utilizes weekly PLC meetings to interpret and analyze data in order to target and improve support services. This data is provided from a variety of sources: CMT data, PowerSchool, Naviance (student success plans), and surveys often completed/filled out by parents, as well as students. Data is also gathered directly as a result of communication with the SHS Leadership Team. This advisory group identifies specific concerns that may be addressed by the school. In the 2016-2017 school year, the staff is studying the impact of student stress in the building, which will lead to the development of programs that will benefit student health and learning. As a result of the school's conscious commitment to providing information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services, students and families can benefit from a wide variety of programs and supports.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation

- school support staff
- school website
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 3

Conclusions

Support services staff consistently and purposefully use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. Support staff members accomplish much of the "behind the scenes" coordination of services through the use of laptops, iPads, and/or desktop computers and the district-wide implementation of PowerSchool and routinely use email to communicate in a timely manner with their colleagues and with parents when the need arises. They also use attendance, behavior, and academic information updated regularly through PowerSchool to develop and evaluate action plans for individual students. PowerSchool also gives parents and guardians both access to student progress reports and the option to email teachers and school support staff members directly. During course selection time, teachers make course recommendations and students are able to view and select courses through the Internet using PowerSchool. PowerSchool also provides both students and parents with online access to student attendance and grades. The school counseling website provides a range of information from how to contact a guidance counselor to much more specific information about and links to a variety of topics including PSAT and SAT testing, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), upcoming guidance-sponsored events, a student job board, and a Twitter feed. Faculty members make regular use of information-sharing tools such as email and network drives to compile information on individual students. Teaching teams that include special education teachers and/or school counselors use IEP Direct, 504 Direct, and PPT Teleconference to share information and to communicate amongst teachers, parents, and support services. The library/media center has computer labs available with SMART Boards for classroom use and also has in-school and remote access to a variety of online information databases, including school-funded subscriptions, to extend the availability of library resources beyond the school day. Student assistive technology for support services includes speech recognition software, word prediction programs, alternative keyboards, switches for device access, speech-generating devices for communication, iPad Apps, virtual manipulatives, and AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) devices. For students looking to take courses for credit recovery, SHS offers online classes through PLATO Learning during both the academic year and the summer. School counselors use Naviance, Twitter, the school website, podcasts, and the school list serve to communicate about programs and information available to students and families. Up-to-date health information, including required school medical forms, leads to links such as one that accesses free and subsidized health insurance. The district health website provides medical information such as dealing with concussions along with a list of the health staff members in each school with their contact information. Since support services staff consistently and purposefully use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student, it is able to provide more timely, coordinated, and efficient delivery of appropriate support services and thus more effectively support students by meeting their physical, academic, and social-emotional needs.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- teacher interview
- students
- parents
- school support staff
- school website

Standard 6 Indicator 4

Conclusions

School counseling services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who deliver a limited written developmental program; meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling; engage in individual and group meetings with all students; deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers; and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. Eight school counselors serve 1,450 students at Simsbury High School. The counselor-to-student ratio is approximately 210 students per counselor, with the exception of the department supervisor, who has a reduced caseload of approximately 40-50 students. Each counselor is responsible for students in grades 9-12 with a specified alphabetical split. School counselors meet with all students at least once individually and once within a grade-level group each school year. During junior year, each counselor meets with every student and her/his parent or guardian for an individual conference to review and discuss post-high school planning. About 90 percent of a randomly selected group of students reported meeting with their guidance counselor more than once during the 2015-2016 school year. In addition, school counselors formally deliver a written guidance curriculum and are currently working with middle school counselors to revise and update the comprehensive school counseling program, incorporating recommendations from the Connecticut State Department of Education and the American School Counselor Association Standards. The department is also staffed by one school social worker and three school psychologists (an increase from two over the past two years) who provide a more intensive layer of counseling and therapeutic support for targeted students from both regular and special education. The Pathways alternative school program and the School Avoidance program have regularly scheduled individual and group sessions in order to best support these most at-risk students. Following professional development provided in the summer of 2016, members of the support staff are piloting practices using mindfulness to reduce student stress. All school counseling staff members collaborate regularly with state and private youth-serving agencies and make ongoing referrals to both private and agency-based mental health centers such as the Wheeler Clinic Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services and the Institute of Living for further therapeutic support and intervention. Ongoing communication and collaboration with these community partners along with parents/guardians provide for a well-coordinated intervention opportunity for targeted SHS students. School support staff have engaged various local mental health therapists to provide programs for parents on such topics as resiliency, substance abuse, and stress. The school counseling services uses a variety of methods to evaluate and improve services and ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century expectations. Parent surveys are used to evaluate programs such as the College Panel, an annual survey of seniors gives graduating students the opportunity to reflect and provide feedback on their experiences with counseling services. Reviews of grades, disciplinary referrals, attendance records, and student assessment data via the SIT meeting are utilized as an ongoing opportunity to fine tune support services as unmet student needs are recognized and intervention strategies developed. Furthermore, school counselors discuss and evaluate existing programs and intervention strategies during their PLC time. As a result of the many ways that SHS counseling services both individually and programmatically strive to meet the counseling needs of each individual student, SHS students receive the advice and support that is essential to ensuring that students are aware of the opportunities offered to them as they work to achieve both the school's 21st century learning expectations and their personal learning goals.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- school support staff
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who consistently provide health services and direct intervention services; use an appropriate referral process when needed; regularly conduct ongoing health assessments; and periodically use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community to improve services and ensure each student has a quality learning experience. The school has one licensed registered full-time nurse and another half-time nurse that provide direct, preventative, and ongoing care to all students in the high school in a modern and well-designed health suite that ensures privacy and has space for confidential meetings and consultations. The direct care that they provide includes emergency response, assessment and first aid treatment of injuries, pain management, and evaluation of illnesses. Additionally, the health services department provides ongoing care that includes health care planning, staff education about medical conditions and treatments, and assessments of student needs. The full-time nurse is a regular member of the student assistance team (SIT), attends PPT meetings as appropriate, and serves on the school's crisis response team. According to the Endicott survey, 80 percent of students feel comfortable going to see the school nurse, almost 80 percent of parents feel that health services personnel provide preventive health and direct intervention services. The health office utilizes the School Nurse Assessment Program (SNAP) software to log all health visits, track immunization records, document screening information, upload health plans, and flag life-threatening health conditions for staff. The health services staff discusses any information that can be shared legally with a student's parents or guardian to ensure that the family has an important role in addressing the health-related concerns of that student. The school also shares this information with classroom teachers of that student when deemed necessary to ensure the health and safety of all concerned. The school nurses use health assessment data to identify, evaluate, and address needs related to health issues and make any necessary changes. For example, the nurse prepares a Quality Assurance Report that is checked monthly for outdated supplies or medications, battery checks, and any other such ongoing equipment maintenance needs and then submits the report to the Board of Education for compliance with current health standards. The nurse also addressed an issue related to the availability of automated external defibrillators. Since the school's health services are adequately staffed and provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, use an appropriate referral process, conduct ongoing student health assessments, use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure students access quality learning experiences, the school maximizes its ability to meet the health needs of its students and consequently enable them to focus on their learning goals.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 6

Conclusions

The school's library/media services are integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum; provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum; ensure that the facility is available and fully staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school; are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning; and conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The library/media center (LMC) is staffed by two full-time school library media specialists, one full-time paraprofessional, and one half-time paraprofessional. In addition, the school assigns a classroom teacher to the LMC during each period for the purpose of performing clerical duties including checking students into the LMC. The certified library/media specialists collaborate with all departments in order to integrate information skills into their respective classroom curricula as a part of their outreach efforts through individual meetings and meetings with PLCs made up of classroom teachers. The library/media specialists' integration of information skills follows the Big 6 model and is most evident with classes in which students are engaged in conducting research projects as they provide direct instruction through mini-lessons which focus on specific information literacy skills such as search techniques, locating resources available through in-house databases, and determining and evaluating Internet sources, books and/or the use of Noodle tools. In addition, the library/media specialists have organized the fiction collection by genre (following the bookstore model), which makes this collection much more accessible and more easily located by students based on their reading interests. The library is open before, during, and after school to promote independent learning, especially for those students who have limited Internet access at home. The Endicott survey indicates that 89 percent of the students polled believe that the school library is available to them before, during, and after school hours and also that it provides them with a wide range of materials, technology, and other information services. The library/media specialists regularly collect data on student and faculty use of their facility and on what materials are accessed and use this data to inform collection development through new purchases and to determine any changes to materials and services offered. One recent change made was to open the writing center in Room 214 at 7:00 a.m. as a direct response to students' expressed need for more time before school to revise and print assignments and reports. The addition of Chromebook carts to the social studies and English departments has reduced the demand for the use of the computer labs adjacent to the library for basic word processing, thus making more available for lessons centered on research projects and on promoting information literacy skills. Students and faculty find the library to be warm, friendly, and intellectually-stimulating. Since the library/media services are often integrated into curriculum and instructional practices and have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who are actively engaged in the implementation of the school's curriculum, provide a wide range of materials, technologies, and other information services in support of the school's curriculum, ensure the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during and after school, are responsive to students' interests and needs in order to support independent learning, conduct ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations, an important component of the SHS educational program is able to enhance student learning in a variety of ways and to stimulate student interest in reading.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour

- students
- school support staff
- Endicott survey
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 6 Indicator 7

Conclusions

There are an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff to provide support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA and English language learners who regularly collaborate with all teachers, counselors, related service providers and other support staff and provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students. There have been several recent additions to the number of certified/licensed personnel to meet the increasing needs of identified students including the addition of two special education teachers (for a total of twelve), the change in the position of speech language pathologist from part time to full time, and the addition of a third full-time school psychologist. In addition to these new staff members, the school has a special education department supervisor, a department coordinator, a social worker, a board-certified behavior analyst (shared between the middle and high schools), seventeen special education paraprofessionals, two job coaches, one transition specialist, two academic tutors, one intervention specialist, one language arts consultant who oversees all English language learner (ELL) staff members, one ELL tutor, one speech and language pathologist assistant (SLPA), one occupational therapist (shared between the high school and one elementary school), one physical therapist (shared between the high school and the middle school), one special services secretary, one transition support specialist (credit recovery), and both an autism supervisor and an inclusion specialist shared with the rest of the district. Almost two-thirds of teachers (64 percent according to the Endicott survey) feel that the school has adequate certified support services personnel for identified students. The student intervention team, consisting of the transition/support specialist, three assistant principals, two school psychologists, one social worker, one special education teacher, the language arts consultant, one nurse (as needed), and one school counselor, meets on a weekly basis to discuss the academic and behavioral needs of struggling regular education students, who may have reached the point after numerous interventions to enter the PPT referral process for special education services. These interventions include tiered instruction (following the RTI model), a credit recovery program, counseling services (individual, support group, and outside of school referrals), summer school options, behavioral interventions and student contracts, mentoring, peer tutoring, and/or assignments to the SAC, math lab, ERC, student intervention room, and the homework club. The transition/support specialist facilitates the successful transition of students from 8th to 9th grade, anticipating potential obstacles to success and proactively putting supports in place. Related service providers, the intervention specialist, and behavioral specialists all consult with special education services to help create or implement Individual Education Plans (IEPs). When school scheduling permits, special educators periodically meet with general education teachers so that all accommodations and modifications specified in the IEPs are provided. However, the frequency of this collaboration can be limited by the fact that a special educator's time is taken by students with relatively high needs, the frequency of necessary parental communications, and all of the teaching duties for which they are responsible. Special education students are included in general education classes on a regular basis, often with the assistance of paraprofessionals. While support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA and English language learners have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services and other support staff, provide inclusive opportunities for all students, and perform ongoing assessment, including feedback from the school community to improve services, achievement data measuring individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations are not collected by the school. As a result of the adequate number of dedicated and involved certified/licensed personnel and support staff, identified students have the support necessary to help them succeed in meeting course and school-wide learning expectations. When the school is able to effectively measure and track the achievement of the SHS 21st century learning expectations, it will have the information needed to continue to improve services effectively and efficiently and better assist identified students in meeting the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- teacher interview
- school leadership

Standard 6 Commendations

Commendation

The wide range of timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies available to all students, including identified and at-risk students, designed to support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations

Commendation

The proactive intervention and support to at-risk students moving from the middle school to the high school provided by the transition/support coordinator in collaboration with the school's support staff

Commendation

The school's extensive and varied efforts to provide information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services

Commendation

The consistent and purposeful use of technology by the school's support staff to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student

Commendation

The school's health services for providing effective direct care and valuable health information and counseling to SHS students

Commendation

The effectiveness of the library/media services staff and facility to provide and encourage the use of a wide range of information services by classroom teachers and by individual students

Commendation

The school's increase in support services staffing in response to the increasing needs of at-risk and identified students

Standard 6 Recommendations

Recommendation

Continue the work to revise and update the written guidance developmental program

Recommendation

Review the effectiveness of special education services based on the collection and analysis of student data regarding the progress of identified students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

Ensure that the special education staff members are allotted sufficient time to meet the increasing needs of their caseloads

Standard 7 Indicator 1

Conclusions

The Simsbury community and the district's governing body provide dependable funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, and sufficient equipment and instructional materials and supplies to implement the instructional program articulated in the core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. According to the most recently available statewide data, Simsbury per pupil expenditure was \$15,423 in 2014-2015. Even during the recent recession, the school has received modest increases in its budget, and the boards of selectmen and education have begun to look at sharing resources to take advantage of economies of scale. Simsbury High School funds an extensive range of curricular options to its 1,450 students. The SHS curriculum includes core academic courses, fine and applied arts, and a broad spectrum of elective classes in coordination with the number of learning clusters (sequencing of courses geared toward specific career tracks) and courses of study available to students. In addition to a wide range of academic and supporting programs, Simsbury also offers a wide range of co-curricular offerings, including interscholastic competitive teams for 38 sports programs, five club sports, seven academic honor societies, and over 45 clubs and activities for students with varying interests. The athletic department's budget comes from both the board of education (BOE), which funds coaching stipends and transportation, and "pay-to-participate" money collected from families (which must fund everything else). Many student athletic and activity programs also benefit from fundraising groups in the community. Most families are able to afford the pay-to-participate fees, and the school offers discounts for families with multiple students participating in the athletic program, as well as exemptions to pay-to-participate for students with established financial need. The high school employs 130.98 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty members, of whom 42 percent have master's degrees, 30.5 percent have sixth-year degrees, and 19.5 percent have seventh-year advanced degrees. The school supports its student population with a school counseling department, which places over 90 percent of students in two- and four-year colleges. The district funds a special education program to support learners in their quest for a competitive and relevant career and college-ready education. The district budget also supports academic support centers and staff in multiple departments (e.g., the English and social studies resource center, the math lab, writing lab, SHS Connect, and the student assistance center). While the district does not offer reimbursement for advanced study to those pursuing a master's degree, it does offer \$800 annually toward coursework to teachers on the master's or sixth-year schedule who engage in further study, and \$1,000 annually to those on the seventh-year schedule. SHS employees are provided with ongoing professional development (PD) opportunities, both individually and collectively. The district of Simsbury currently provides five full-day PD days and six half-day PD sessions scheduled on six early-release school days. Additionally, the district provides time weekly for all teachers to engage in small professional learning community (PLC) groups aimed at increasing collaboration related to assessment and instructional practices. In addition, the district has recently increased its commitment to funding individual teacher development as the current board of education has made this a district priority. Over the past several years, the district has allotted 110 professional days for SHS's teachers, increasing that amount by 30 days for the 2015-2016 school year. The district also increased its budget for staff training at the high school from a flat \$3,385 that did not change from 2011-2012 through 2014-15 to \$10,000 in 2015-2016 to enable district employees to be informed about current practices. The district's financial support for summer curriculum projects has also increased considerably in recent years. In 2013-2014, the district allocated \$15,422 for summer curriculum work; this amount increased to \$25,706 in the 2014-2015 school year and to \$32,503 in the 2015-2016 school year. Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year, the district has also dramatically increased the funding allocated for technology after years of underfunding in this area. For that year, Simsbury High School received \$142,000 for new technology and \$28,000 for software, and these amounts were increased to \$150,000 and \$35,000, respectively, in 2015-2016. The high school achieved a 2:1 student to Chromebook ratio in 2015-2016 and is scheduled to upgrade to a 1:1 student to Chromebook ratio by 2017-2018. All classrooms have SMART Boards, and each department has access to Chromebook carts to be utilized by students. The school library has two computer labs and approximately 100 computers. Teachers have

been offered the opportunity to apply to receive iPads, and 74 have received them over the past several years. To support the school's technology, the school is provided a technical support staff team on-site to troubleshoot hardware, software, and network problems, but with the increase in the amount of technology available to teachers and students, the size of this team may be insufficient. The principal's budget each year includes amounts estimated for copiers, office supplies, textbooks, and other instructional supplies. Some departments (e.g., science, music, art, and library media) have their own designated budgets for these areas while other departments must request funds for any needs from the principal. Teachers, in general, report that they are provided with sufficient supplies to implement the curriculum. By providing consistent, recurring, and dependable sources of funding for a wide range of school programs and services, sufficient professional and support staff, ongoing professional development and curriculum revision, a full range of technology support, and sufficient equipment and instructional materials and supplies to implement the instructional program, SHS has the necessary resources to support students as they strive to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- school board
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 2

Conclusions

The school develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalog, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on daily basis. The board of education (BOE) is highly engaged in the budget process, forming committees involving administrators, parents, students, and community members to plan for future needs, particularly those needs related to capital improvements. The district has a capital improvement plan that currently extends from 2015 to 2020. Although there were no capital improvements to SHS in 2013-2014, in 2014-2015 the high school received new surfacing for its synthetic track and maintenance work was completed on the turf field, and in 2015-2016 the school began and completed a courtyard beautification project that was spearheaded by the principal while also benefitting from district-wide upgrades to system-wide network servers, email and other storage systems, and communications infrastructure (i.e., fiber, wireless routers, switches, firewalls, and filters). Over the summer of 2015, the high school began the process of installing a more energy-efficient LED lighting system to parallel similar upgrades in lighting to the school parking lot. Hallway lighting has already been replaced, and the school is currently working to install LED lights in every classroom. During the 2015-2016 school year, the district continued to update network infrastructure improvements (an ongoing process) and included SHS as part of a district-wide climate control project which involved installing air conditioning in the faculty rooms and the newer gold gym in the spring of 2016. In addition, there are projected plans to install air conditioning in the cafeteria. However, there is a general concern that excessively warm conditions on the third floor warrant the installation of air conditioning. Future planned capital improvement projects include additional improvements to network infrastructure, replacement of the tennis courts, and renovations and improvements to the SHS stadium including concession stand, bathrooms, and improvements to both practice fields and locker rooms. There is also a plan to create an Athletic Hall of Fame. Seventy percent of students report that furniture and equipment in classrooms is in good condition and equipment is generally replaced on an as-needed basis, and 81 percent of faculty members feel that the school building is clean and well maintained. The school satisfactorily maintains, catalogs, and replaces equipment. Basic maintenance of electronic equipment includes an inventory, cleaning, replacement of batteries, charging, and storage of each item, with scheduled maintenance and inventory generally taking place over the summer months. Electronic equipment is replaced on an emergency, as-needed basis by the building computer technicians, as well as through planned updates by the director of instructional technology and the director of systems technology. There is a weekly building and planning committee meeting that consists of an assistant principal, the director of athletics and student activities, music department supervisor, fine arts technician, and head custodian. This committee examines the schedule of activities and building use, and from that examination, determines custodial staffing and responsibilities. These are followed up by weekly meetings of the head custodian and custodial day and night shift coordinators to allocate weekly staffing hours, to ensure the cleaning of the building if custodians are out, to accommodate the use of the facility by outside groups, to address requests from the custodial repair database, and to address recent needs that have arisen. The calendar is reviewed and updated. The school is staffed by 12 custodians who are assigned building assignments on a rotating basis, a change from the previous practice of assigning specific custodians to specific work areas for the entire year. The supervisor of buildings and grounds is responsible for all training for and management of the high school custodial staff. The custodial staff keeps the building clean and maintained as documented by results from the Endicott survey indicating that 92 percent of certified staff members, 82 percent of students, and 98 percent of parents believe that the school is clean and well maintained. While the custodial staff is able to maintain the building, custodians and teachers note since the building size has increased over past years, additional custodial staff may be needed to maintain current school cleanliness. Because the school usually develops, plans, and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalog, and replace equipment, and to keep the school clean on daily basis, its facilities should remain able to fully support student learning.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- facility tour
- school board
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 3

Conclusions

The community funds and the school implements a long range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. The school has both Two- and Five-Year Targeted Plans that clearly delineate improvements to a variety of programs and services, including but not limited to, the SHS Connect program, improving instructional and assessment practices, upgrading the athletic facilities, and updating the developmental guidance program. The plan provides an essential tool in prioritizing school needs for future annual school budgets. District budgets for the past four years have increased by relatively small percentages (1.89 percent in 2013-2014, 1.05 percent in 2014-2015, 1.30 percent in 2015-2016, and a proposed 1.94 percent in 2016-2017), which create a need for careful planning to ensure that future budgets are aligned to the highest priority needs of the school program. In addition, every year the principal submits a section in his budget for "Five-Year Planning," which is designed to help the district to anticipate future needs. The district makes long-range enrollment projections to inform decisions about personnel needs. All recent projections have called for a steady decline in the school enrollment, and the district does provide contingency funds in the event that the projections are incorrect. Funding for the facility is also included in the principal's annual budget, in the section entitled "Building and Grounds." This includes creating another multi-use practice turf field, repairing the tennis courts, building locker rooms, and upgrading concession stands and bathrooms to address needed improvements to the athletic facilities. The district director of technology reports that \$142,000 was allocated for technology and \$28,000 for software at the high school in 2014-2015, and these amounts increased to \$150,000 and \$35,000, respectively, for 2015-2016 in order to make up for several years of lean technology budgets. The district has a Five-Year Technology Plan that includes both the acquisition and maintenance of needed hardware and improvements to the infrastructure. Future capital improvement projects at SHS include reliably funded projects that have been approved in the past several years, including roof repairs, resurfacing of the track and maintenance on the turf field, and air conditioning in certain spaces in the high school. Not all requests make it into the capital improvement budget, but those that do are usually fully funded. Since the community plans for and provides funding to meet future needs in areas related staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements, the school sustains programs that enable all students to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- school board
- central office personnel
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 4

Conclusions

Faculty and building administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget. It is common practice at SHS to have teachers make suggestions to their department supervisors about curricular content and materials needed to deliver the curriculum. Department supervisors usually work within a financial framework based on past budgets, but current needs, initiatives, and approved curricular revisions can also influence the amount of money allocated to each department. Given these considerations, department supervisors then present a budget to the principal, who considers it and ultimately makes a recommendation to the central office. Central office administrators including the superintendent, assistant superintendents, director of human resources, and business manager meet with the principal to examine each category in his proposed budget and to discuss his top priorities. These administrators then look at fixed costs, needs of the district as a whole, and class size data before crafting the budget that will be presented to the board of education (BOE) for its approval. The board of finance (BOF) provides a target budget number for the BOE, and then the budget is presented at a public hearing and is voted up or down by the town in referendum. If necessary, the BOE will revisit the education budget and resubmit it for final approval. Recently, the BOE has collaborated much better with the BOF, board of selectmen, community members, and local businesses in the process of developing and presenting their budget. The BOE also has a public SCTV broadcast that is watched by many community members and posts budget information on its website. As a result, the community is well informed about overall and ongoing budget process. The BOE does not micromanage the budgetary process at the school level and allows building administrators to make decisions prior to final budget approval and gives the principal wide latitude in determining where any cuts are made in the budget resolution process. The involvement of the school community in the budget process allows the school to prioritize its requests based on its core value and beliefs and enables the school to communicate the school's needs and priorities to the superintendent, the board of education, and the Simsbury community.

Sources of Evidence

- school board
- central office personnel
- school leadership
- Standard sub-committee

Standard 7 Indicator 5

Conclusions

The school site and plant of Simsbury High School for the most part effectively support the delivery of high quality school programs and services. The Endicott survey indicates that 84 percent of students and 89 percent of certified staff members feel that the school's facility adequately supports its programs and services, and 94 percent of parents believe that the school's physical plant is conducive to education. The school recently refurbished the theater seats to support its strong theater program. The guidance department has a suite of offices with ample space for all of the counselors and support staff. Each counselor has his/her own office, thus ensuring a confidential and private area in which to meet with individual students. The spacious math lab is available to students grades 9-12 as a resource, and is conducive to providing students with the assistance that they need. The food services preparation area is adequate to provide quality food and programs to feed SHS students in three lunch waves. The cafeteria has a seating capacity of 541 students, and there is also additional seating outside for students to eat lunch when weather permits. The school has 38 varsity programs, but field space on campus is insufficient to support the many sport offerings that the school has running in any given year with the result that many scheduled games are played off-site. The school is planning to address the needs of its extensive athletic programs in the very near future. The science labs are sufficient in number, have sufficient storage area, and are adequately equipped to support a 21st century science curriculum; additionally, 91 percent of students report that the labs are in good working condition. The library media center is spacious and well equipped for the students with their research needs and reading interests. The school has an adequate number of classrooms with sufficient classroom space to support the school programs and services and has recently been able to allocate space for a collaboration room designed to foster creative thinking and planning. The parking lot in the front of the building has new lighting and provides a safe and secure parking area. There is, however, a shortage of parking spaces for the many students who want to drive to school, so students requesting parking are entered into a lottery and seniors are given priority for parking spaces. The building is not fully air conditioned. While much of the building has recently been air conditioned, third floor classrooms can become very hot, making it difficult for students to function at their peak. According to the Simsbury Public Schools District Continuous Improvement Plan, stakeholders express satisfaction with the district's efforts related to safety and social and social/emotional well-being as measured by the percentage of students responding favorably on social/emotional security indicators. While the school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services in most areas, improvements to the third floor climate and to the school's sports facilities will ensure that students will be provided with a comfortable learning environment in all classrooms and all student athletes will have the field space to pursuit their sports-related passions.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey

Standard 7 Indicator 6

Conclusions

Simsbury High School consistently maintains documentation that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws and are in compliance with local fire, health, and safety regulations. The director of building and grounds maintains documentation indicating that the physical plant and facilities meet all applicable federal and state laws. This documentation can be found in the elevators, boiler room, and mechanical areas. Mechanical and HVAC experts visit the school based on a regular maintenance schedule to ensure proper functioning of physical plant equipment. Certificates are located on the equipment itself as evidence that it has been inspected. All fire alarms and extinguishers are tested and checked regularly and appropriate records are maintained. The nurse keeps detailed electronic health records. All chemicals in the building are tracked and located on a material and safety data sheet. The science department signs out the chemicals needed for classes and returns them once done to ensure that chemicals are stored and properly disposed, and safety equipment in all science labs, including the safety shower and eyewash, are tested and the elevator is checked and certified annually. All staff members receive annual safety training approved by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The Farmington Valley Health Department inspects the cafeteria and kitchen areas as evidenced by documentation located on the wall of the cafeteria. The internal and external school plant and facilities are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the improvements to the athletic facilities described in the Two-Year Targeted Plan will also be ADA-compliant. The school's diligence in meeting all federal, state, and local safety regulations plays a major role in establishing an environment in which all members of the school community feel safe.

Sources of Evidence

- facility tour
- teachers
- school support staff

Standard 7 Indicator 7

Conclusions

The professional staff at Simsbury High School actively engages many parents and families as partners in each student's education and reaches out specifically to those families who have been less connected to the school. The school has an annual open house in September in which parents meet their children's teachers, hear an overview of the students' courses, and are provided with an opportunity to schedule conferences with any teacher. The school makes a great deal of information available on its website (<http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us>), including information concerning the school calendar, the School Improvement Plan, a schedule of upcoming sporting and other school-related events, updated school news, a message from the principal, and links to the teachers' webpages. Student grades are recorded and maintained in PowerSchool, allowing both parents to track student performance in each course taken. Teachers are required to update PowerSchool a minimum of every two weeks to ensure timely feedback to students and parents. Teachers can also communicate with families and students through comments on individual assignments or on overall performance. Parents also have the option to receive electronic updates each time a teacher updates the information available online. PowerSchool also contains contact information for the parents of each student, which is updated each year so that teachers can communicate with parents as needed. The secondary school data specialist runs a report that lists all students with a "D" or "F" in any course, and the teachers of these students are required to contact a parent or a guardian with a follow-up attempt if the teacher is unable to contact a parent or guardian on the first try. The teacher is also required to provide the appropriate building administrator with documentation of each attempt. The school also provides to families the student/parent handbook, which contains information about school rules, eligibility requirements, and other school and district rules and policies and includes a Parent/Guardian Communication Guide. As the school year progresses, teachers contact parents by email or phone whenever a student is demonstrating significant academic or behavioral difficulties. Despite these successful activities, the Endicott survey results report that only 63 percent of parents feel that the professional staff actively engages their family as partners in their son's/daughter's education. The parents of students in the Open Choice program (who are bused to Simsbury from Hartford) have had a more difficult time staying connected. As a result, the school now has a coordinator to act as a liaison between the school and these Open Choice families. Only when the school is fully able to engage all families as partners in their children's education will all students be able to receive the full support of a vital component in contributing to their school success.

Sources of Evidence

- self-study
- facility tour
- teacher interview
- teachers
- students
- parents
- Endicott survey
- school website

Standard 7 Indicator 8

Conclusions

The school actively develops productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. The Endicott survey finds that 82 percent of parents, 79 percent of school staff, and 77 percent of students agree with the statement that Simsbury High School has effective partnerships to support student learning. The parent teacher council (SPTC) is active in promoting the welfare of the high school community through a variety of efforts to foster cooperation among students, parents/guardians, and faculty members. Every family is encouraged to join this organization, and approximately 450 families belong to the SPTC. Information about the SPTC is readily available on the school website (<http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us>). The SPTC provides funding for a post-prom to keep students safe, provides scholarship and grant opportunities, and supports a number of school activities including the Trojan wall club, the robotics group, the annual 9th grade orientation, and a variety of special events or projects designed to support SHS students. In addition, the music program, art programs, and sports teams all have parent support groups. The school has a number of varsity level sports, including crew, football, and lacrosse, that have parent support groups which operate through the athletic department. The friends of Simsbury Music organization supports the various bands, orchestras, and singing groups throughout the school. There are also a number of community businesses, such as Little City Pizza and Fitzgerald's that provide support for student activities. Students have a variety of opportunities to enhance their learning and support the Simsbury community. The SHS choral group travels to Loaves and Fishes for community outreach. The school sponsors a program called "The Truth About Hate" developed by the Anti-Defamation League. The robotics group is supported by Ensign Bickford Aerospace and Defense and the yearbook is supported by local businesses as students solicit advertisements to be published in the yearbook. The Red Cross provides a leadership program to teach students the benefits of blood donation and supports the two blood drives held in each school year. The business and finance technology department sponsors clubs in partnership with Junior Achievement and with Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), and some local entrepreneurs volunteer their time in the classroom to enrich student learning. Simsbury High School has established several higher education partnerships that reach beyond the immediate community to support student learning. For example, some students participate in As Students Match Wits, and students also have the opportunity to attend a career fair at Tunxis Community College. Chemistry students recently had the opportunity to travel to Brandeis University to work with college professors. There have also been educational partnerships with the University of Connecticut and the University of New Haven to participate in pre-engineering programs. Students that are part of the Pathways program have traveled to local colleges and visited with local businesses to experience the options available to them beyond high school. An organization called the Community of Concern was formed to support family requests for a variety of needs; building a stronger partnership in the support of students and families. The school's commitment to developing productive parent, community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning provides many students with more opportunities to have authentic learning experiences and develop social responsibility and global awareness in accord with its civic and social learning expectations.

Sources of Evidence

- classroom observations
- self-study
- student shadowing
- panel presentation

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

Standard 7 Commendations

Commendation

The community's commitment to provide dependable funding for a large array of high quality curricular options, extracurricular athletics, clubs, and activities

Commendation

The development and implementation of long range plans that address programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements

Commendation

The degree of autonomy provided the building principal that ensures that the school's core values and beliefs play a central role in setting budgetary priorities

Commendation

The cleanliness of the school that plays a role in providing a healthy and safe learning environment for SHS students

Commendation

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

Commendation

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

Commendation

The variety of opportunities in which families can actively participate in their children's education and school community

Commendation

The extensive partnerships with community, business, and higher education institutions and organizations

Commendation

The inclusive budget process that fosters communication and cooperation among the school, district administrators, the board of education, and the Simsbury community

Standard 7 Recommendations

Recommendation

Increase transparency in the budget process and communicate to faculty members the results of their input into this process

Recommendation

Implement the provision in the Two-Year Targeted Plan to upgrade the school's athletic fields and facilities

Recommendation

Ensure that the increase in technological resources is supported by improvements in the infrastructure necessary to support the technology

Recommendation

Explore the feasibility of providing air conditioning in third floor classrooms

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 this 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 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 the Standards for Accreditation. The Commission's Substantive Change Policy is included on the next page. All other substantive changes should be included in the Two- and Five-Year Progress Reports and/or the Annual Report which is required of each member school to ensure that the Commission office has current statistical data on the school.

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

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

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

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

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

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

Roster of Team Members

Chair(s)

Chair: Mr. John Keogh - New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

Assistant Chair: Mary Lou Devine - Stonington High School

Visiting Team Members

Kimberly Davis - Newington Public Schools

Jeanne Deming - Ridgefield High School

Kate Dias - Manchester High School

Karyn Eves - Quinebaug Middle College

Jane Greenleaf - Murdock High School

Brian Harrigan - Natick High School

Victor Leger - Torrington High School

Dave Lenn - Enfield High School

Jennifer MacKenzie - New Fairfield High School

Diana Rainho - Fairfield Ludlowe High School

Joe Sapienza - Brookfield High School

David Schiappa - Cranston High School West

Richard Troy - Naugatuck High School

Crystal Velez - John F. Kennedy High School