

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Hamden High School

Hamden, CT

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STATEMENT ON LIMITATIONS

THE DISTRIBUTION, USE, AND SCOPE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

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

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Statement On Limitations

Introduction.....	5
School and Community Summary.....	7
School’s Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations	9
Teaching and Learning Standards	10
Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations	11
Curriculum.....	15
Instruction	21
Assessment of and for Student Learning.....	28
Support of Teaching and Learning Standards	35
School Culture and Leadership.....	36
School Resources for Learning	45
Community Resources for Learning	53
Follow-Up Responsibilities	60

APPENDICES

- A. Roster of Visiting Committee Members
- B. Committee Policy on Substantive Change
- C. List of Commendations and Recommendations

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 American and International Schools Abroad (CAISA).

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

- Teaching and Learning Standards
 - Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations
 - Curriculum
 - Instruction
 - Assessment of and for Student Learning
- Support 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 committee, and the follow-up program carried out by the school to implement the findings of its own self-study and the valid recommendations of the visiting committee and those identified by the Committee in the Follow-Up process. Continued accreditation requires that the school be reevaluated at least once every ten years and that it show continued progress addressing identified needs.

Preparation for the Accreditation Visit - The School Self-Study

A steering committee of the professional staff was appointed to supervise the myriad details inherent in the school's self-study. At Hamden High School, a committee of 17 members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of Hamden School extended over a period of 18 school months from April 2013 to April 2015. The visiting committee was pleased to note that student advisories, members of the school board and members of the PTSA joined the professional staff in the self-study deliberations.

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

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

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 25.3 hours shadowing 16 students for a half day
- a total of 20 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
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

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

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

Hamden High School School and Community Profile

Hamden High School (HHS), located in Hamden, Connecticut, is a comprehensive four-year public school for grades 9 through 12. As the sole public high school for the community, HHS has an enrollment of approximately 1,900 students, making it one of the largest high schools in Connecticut. Hamden High School's historic main building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One of the building's most notable features is a golden cupola atop a clock tower at the front of the building. Below the clock tower sits a small circular window with two festoons (draping plaster banners on the sides) seeming to form the letter 'M,' giving the building the nickname the "MOM building."

Hamden is a suburb of New Haven located six miles north of downtown New Haven and Yale University. Sleeping Giant State Park and Quinnipiac University lie to the north of the high school. The town celebrates a diverse population of approximately 60,000 residents with a median income of \$56,982. In 2013 the unemployment rate was as 7.09% compared to the state unemployment rate of 6.9%. The percentage of families living below poverty level is 12.3% (2012) compared to the state average of 10% in the same time period. The number of students in Hamden High School who are eligible for free and reduced lunch is 36.7%, which has increased by 10% over the last 5 years.

Hamden High School is also racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse. Approximately 40% of the student body identify as White, 35% identify as Black, 16% as Hispanic, and 6% as Asian. The school serves approximately 100 students who are not fluent in English and come from all over the world including the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. HHS celebrates its diversity in a number of ways. We honor our differences through clubs such as the Black and Hispanic Student Union and the Asian World-Wide Pride Club, courses like African American Literature and World Religions, and programs including the Southern Connecticut Conference (SCC) Diversity Dream Team.

The Hamden Public School District consists of one preschool, eight elementary schools for students in grades kindergarten through grade 6, one middle school for students in grades 7 and 8, and one high school for students in grades 9 through 12. The Hamden Collaborative Learning Center (HCLC) is a district-based alternative education program for students in grades 7-12. Hamden's expenditure per pupil is \$15,349 as compared to the state average of \$16,274. The recently passed town budget allotted 39.49% of their total appropriations for education.

The four-year graduation rate from Hamden High School is 85.3% with an additional 9.5% graduating after 4.5-5 years. The average daily attendance rate for students is 95%. The average daily attendance rate for teachers is 93%. From the class of 2013, 60% of students were enrolled in a four-year college program and 31% of students were enrolled in a two-year college program post HHS graduation. The percentage of students who entered the military was 1.1% and 3.4% of students entered the work force, with 4% of students with unknown activities post graduation.

Diverse and specialized programs exist to meet the individual needs of students. Collaborations with surrounding universities such as the University of Connecticut, Yale University, Quinnipiac University, Southern Connecticut State University, and the University of New Haven give students opportunities for independent study, to attend business career conferences, and to earn college credits. Other programs include the Educational Center for the Arts, Advanced Placement programs, Green Dragon Enterprises, and the community service program.

Students are recognized for their academic achievements, participation in extracurricular activities and contributions to the community. Senior and junior award ceremonies are held in June, and seniors are honored at the Top Ten Dinner each year. Students are recognized for academic, athletic and service achievements in ceremonies such as Student of the Month, Superintendent Student of the Month, Connecticut High School Fine Arts awards (CAS), athletic banquets, and inductions into national honor societies.

Hamden High School Core Values & Beliefs

We aspire to educate students in a rigorous, diverse and supporting learning environment. All students at Hamden High School are challenged to become socially, culturally and globally aware as well as civically active and productive. Our students will demonstrate responsible personal behaviors, and will achieve self-reliance in order to obtain college/career readiness skills. Our students are further expected to be caring and productive young men and women who are resilient and resourceful problem solvers. We believe students learn best when they are given real-world learning opportunities, and when adults work collaboratively to ensure a safe, supportive and engaging learning environment.

Academic Expectations

Students will:

- Read with comprehension.
- Write effectively to communicate for a wide variety of purposes.
- Demonstrate creativity.
- Solve complex problems.
- Use technology discerningly to access, analyze and use information.

Social and Civic Expectations

Students will:

- Understand and carry out their responsibilities as members of the community.
- Understand physical, mental and social health strategies.

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

**CORE VALUES, BELIEFS, AND LEARNING
EXPECTATIONS**

CURRICULUM

INSTRUCTION

**ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT
LEARNING**

Teaching and Learning Standard

1

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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

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

Conclusions

Hamden High School has in many areas engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based best practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. Many teachers, students, and support staff are aware of the core values and beliefs. A committee of teachers, parents and students designed the core values and beliefs. After adoption, the core values and beliefs went through a review process. The faculty and staff had an opportunity to voice their opinions during the revision process at a professional development day on October 18, 2013. Through Connections, the school's advisory program, the students participated in an activity labeled "Getting to Know HHS Core Values & Beliefs." This activity allowed students to "understand and internalize HHS Core Values & Beliefs." Students created posters depicting the core values to be placed around the school. On January 14, 2013, the PTSA reviewed the Core Values Statement and feedback was given.

The core values and beliefs are evident on the school's letterhead and are available on the website and in the Green and Gold Handbook. The core values and beliefs posters were displayed in some of the classrooms, but not throughout the school. According to the Endicott survey conducted December 2013, 67.2 percent of students and 85.8 percent of parents are familiar with the core values and beliefs. When surveyed, both teachers and students knew the core values and beliefs existed, but there was no clear indication of understanding of the document. Due to the established core values and beliefs, Hamden High School has a research-based framework to ensure students are being challenged to meet the 21st century learning expectations. When the school community collaboratively commits to its core values and beliefs about learning, students have a stronger sense of connection to their school community. When schools have measurable and challenging 21st century learning expectations that identify targeted high levels of achievement all students have the opportunity to reach their potential. (Endicott survey, teachers, self-study, school support staff)

On the whole, the school has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies and are comprehensively defined by the school-wide analytic rubrics; however, these rubrics do not identify targeted high levels of achievement. The school has established rubrics in all areas of the academic, social and civic expectations. To ensure all students are exposed to the academic, social and civic competencies, all departments are assigned two rubrics to assess student work. However, the extent to which all departments use these rubrics varies. Some departments use the rubrics to guide student work and to indicate achievement in target areas while others attach rubrics to student work after a grade has been given. In the latter case, students are not clear whether the grade corresponds to the rubric or what would have been expected of them to earn a higher grade. All departments are required to use the established writing rubric as writing across the curriculum is a school-wide goal at HHS. The school has also determined that the writing rubric would be used as the Student Learning Objective (SLO 1). All students and teachers are familiar with the writing rubric. There is an expectation that all students will "meet the standard," however there has been no formalized target level of achievement that has been established so what that standard actually looks like is unclear to both students and teachers. Baseline data was collected among grades 9, 10, & 11 early in 2014 using the summer reading assignment. A second assessment was given in March 2015. The data from the second assessment was not concluded at the time of the visit. According to teachers, there is an overall "comfort" shift in students and their writing abilities. Teachers report students are not as reluctant to participate in the writing activity. However, students report they only feel confident in their writing abilities when they receive constructive feedback.

The Endicott survey reports 44 percent of students agree that the school's learning expectations are challenging. There are inconsistencies among various teachers as to the standards of the writing rubrics. Teachers are expected to go beyond area of expertise to assess student writing. Students feel

there is no feedback for improvement when this occurs. Because of this inconsistency, there is no set standard, and assessment of students is dependent upon the range of comfort the teacher feels with the rubric. When there are measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students which address academic, social, and civic competencies and are comprehensively defined by the school-wide analytic rubrics that are used consistently among all departments, teachers can fairly assess students and have the means to provide meaningful feedback. (teachers, panel presentation, Endicott survey)

In many areas, the school's core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations are reflected in the culture of the school, curriculum, instruction and assessment in every classroom, but inconsistently guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The school's core values and beliefs are evident in the school culture. According to the self-study, students have many opportunities to become immersed in social, cultural and global awareness through the many clubs and opportunities available to them. Course offerings such as Civics, World Religion and Foreign Policy are accessible to students. Students also have the opportunity to study various cultures through language classes such as Chinese, Spanish, Latin, Hebrew, and Italian. HHS students also have an opportunity to participate in a ten-day European trip. To qualify students must produce a research paper on the selected location before they are immersed in the culture. There are also occasions where students can travel beyond their local community on trips to New York City, Boston, and Williamsburg. There is also a trip to Bermuda for a biology workshop. Students also have the occasion to engage in problem-solving opportunities through real-life experiences. The school offers a student store run by the DECA program, a CNA program and a school restaurant that enable students to meet the 21st century learning expectations.

The school's core values and beliefs inconsistently drive curriculum, instruction and assessment. Hamden High School's core values, beliefs, and expectations were incorporated into the *Understanding by Design (UbD)* template. However, there is inconsistent evidence that all teachers are using the current *UbD* template. Upon review of student work, there was little evidence that rubrics are used to drive instruction. Students are given limited feedback. Additionally, students receive limited opportunities to improve, self-reflect or self-assess. There is a general consensus among teachers that there is limited time to collaborate on instructional practices. Teachers expressed there is professional learning community (PLC) time allotted into the schedule. However, the time is spent primarily calibrating writing samples instead of discussing best practices. There is also a lack of collaboration in co-teaching situations. Outside of the freshman team, many teachers expressed that any collaboration time is done on their own time. During the teacher panel, it was expressed that there is a lack of professional development for teachers in co-teaching situations.

According to the self-study, grouping practices at Hamden High School include grouping students by ability level in most core classes with the exception of a half-year civics class that is heterogeneously grouped for all sophomores. Students are enrolled in core classes using grouping practices. These grouping practices attempt to ensure all students are exposed to a rigorous learning environment. When students were interviewed, there was a divide as to whether the classes are challenging. Some students feel that the classes that they are taking are challenging and some students feel the classes are not. Through the support staff interview, it was noted there is a protocol parents and students must use to advance to a more rigorous class. If students or parents are interested in advancement to a more rigorous class, they are required to "over-ride" the system. There were some concerns raised by teachers and support staff that some parents may not know this option exists.

The school's core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations are reflected in the allocation of resources. For example, many teachers have access to new computers, projectors, and document cameras. These advancements in technology within the classroom enable teachers to use technology discerningly, demonstrate creativity and communicate for a wide variety of purposes thus differentiating for a variety of learning styles. Due to the numerous amounts of opportunities for students to move outside of their community, there is a successful attempt at globalization. When the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations are embedded in all aspects of the school culture,

students are better prepared for the wider community beyond high school. (self-study, facility tour, student work, students)

Hamden High School infrequently reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations but has created a plan for regular review and revision for the future based on research, multiple data sources, as well as district and school community priorities. Research was conducted through Partnership for 21st Century Skills as well as consulting other successful models to establish a document conducive to the HHS population. Although the Green and Gold Guide is updated every year, only 41.5 percent of staff indicates that HHS core values and beliefs about learning guide decisions related to policies and procedures are continuously re-examined. Teachers have concurred that the school must allocate time to update, revise, and ensure the core values and beliefs about learning beyond monthly department meetings. There was also a solicitation of feedback from the local business community at the yearly career fair to validate the 21st century learning expectations were being met. Once a month teachers meet during prep time and/or after school to discuss data. The freshman team has integrated a common planning time during which they discuss data once a month. The school has offered in-house professional development for teachers on how to use the rubrics. The principal along with many stakeholders have recognized a need to annually review the core values and beliefs and have planned to do so at the first August meeting of every school year. When more time is allocated to review and revise the core and beliefs, the document can be used effectively to guide school-wide decisions. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers)

Commendations:

1. The inclusive process used to create the school's core values and beliefs
2. The use of the school's Connection program to introduce the core values to the student body
3. The integration of the writing rubric into all departments and the collection of baseline data for grades 9, 10 and 11
4. The evidence of the school's core values and beliefs in the daily culture of the school

Recommendations:

1. Create an anchor set for rubrics to set a target level for student achievement
2. Increase awareness of the core values and beliefs through Connection time, parent/teacher meetings, cultural gatherings and student assemblies
3. Encourage the consistent use of rubrics in all departments.
4. Offer professional development in research-based effective writing strategies.
5. Use the school-wide rubrics to provide meaningful feedback to students and encourage revision and reflection,

2

Curriculum

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

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

Conclusions

To some extent the curriculum is purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. According to the Endicott survey, about 56 percent of teachers feel the school's formal curriculum design ensures that all students practice and achieve all of the school's learning expectations, while 89 percent of parents report the same. Curriculum status reports show the disciplines of health and physical education as having completed the revision of their curriculum using the *Understanding by Design (UbD)* format. Other disciplines such as applied arts, English, science and world languages have indicated more than 50 percent completion. The disciplines of mathematics, social studies and fine arts have reported little to no completion. In addition, during teacher interviews it was stated mathematics does not utilize the *UbD* format. Teachers and curriculum directors report several subject areas have not formally revised their curriculum since 2008. The self-study narrative begins by explaining that although the written curriculum is not purposefully designed with 21st century learning expectations, the taught curriculum does reflect these expectations. Teachers also state that in the subject areas that do not have updated curriculum, the 21st century learning expectations appear in what is taught. Also, teachers agree that implementing the writing rubric in their disciplines has supported their efforts in this area. When the written curriculum is purposefully designed with the 21st century learning expectations, each student will be ensured the opportunity to practice and achieve each of the school's learning expectations. (teachers, self-study, central office administrators)

The curriculum is partly written in a common format that includes units of study, 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. The written curriculum shows that the units of study are written in a common format that includes essential questions, concepts, content, and skills. It is stated in the self-study that although curriculum is designed using *UbD*, not all classes have approved curriculum. The Endicott survey shows 46 percent of teachers and 74 percent of parents agree the units of study address essential questions, concepts, content, and skills.

21st century learning expectations are written in a common format. However, most of the written curriculum does not specifically identify the learning expectations taught and assessed in each unit. Teachers report this is because the learning expectations were written and approved after most of the curriculum had been revised. The curriculum attempts to include instructional strategies through the *UbD* format. Instructional strategies can be described as the elements necessary in the teaching/learning process. This includes curriculum development, laboratory planning, and evaluation, in addition to the delivery system to be used in the teaching process. There is some evidence of these instructional strategies shown in Stage 3 of the *UbD* template. However, what was observed in the classroom is very didactic in nature.

Assessment practices that include the use of school-wide analytic and course-specific rubrics are present in the curriculum. Each department is responsible for implementing two of the school-wide rubrics, one of which must be the writing rubric. There is some evidence of the use of the rubrics in the student work provided. However, there is no connection between the rubric assessment and the grade assigned to the student. The design of this curriculum highlights essential questions, concepts, content, and skills that provide students with direction in what is to be learned; however, it is difficult to determine how instruction is to be delivered to students in the classroom. (teachers, classroom observations, Endicott survey, curriculum guides)

The curriculum frequently emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, cross-disciplinary learning, authentic learning opportunities, informed and ethical use of technology. The concepts of inquiry and problem solving have been identified as areas of success according to students and staff. According to the Endicott survey, 70 percent of HHS students believe the current curriculum provides ample opportunities for inquiry and problem solving along with rigorous coursework at every level while, 79 percent of staff members strongly believe that the curriculum is challenging and promotes inquiry and

problem solving. Curriculum documents clearly identify the knowledge and skills students are expected to know and to do. The “Enduring Understandings” section provides the depth of understanding for these knowledge and skills. Although lacking in many of the curriculum documents, the application of skills and knowledge was observed in the classrooms.

Inquiry and problem solving are identified in the written curriculum and during teacher interviews. Several students also report they are challenged with lessons that incorporate the use of real-world problems and current events in the classroom. This was especially evident during observation in the AP classes. Teachers state the *UbD* format helps in the formation and design of enriched real-world problem-solving activities which relate to what students are experiencing outside the classroom.

Some students state they are challenged and engaged in activities that promote higher order thinking. Questioning techniques used by teachers during observations show some use of formative assessment to determine if students are achieving higher order thinking skills. Teachers report that performance tasks are designed to require higher order thinking and to allow students to apply their new learning in meaningful ways. This is also evident in student work.

Cross-disciplinary learning is inconsistently implemented at Hamden High School. Staff (43.1 percent) agrees that the curriculum in its current state emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning. Some areas offer students an opportunity for cross-curricular learning through a back-to-back double period of courses such as US History and American Literature. However, observation of one of these classes demonstrated a lack of connection between the two subject areas. Instead the lessons delivered were not complementary and lacked continuity.

During classroom observations it was evident some students were engaged and provided with authentic learning opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom. However, only 36 percent of the students report there are sufficient opportunities for these types of activities. Administrators and teachers highlight programs such as Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course, and the ServSafe food certification program as providing students with these out-of-classroom opportunities. Teachers and staff also made reference to their strong connection to local community colleges and universities and they are seen as a feeder school for these institutions.

Administrators state the use and availability of technology is abundant at the middle and elementary levels but is not as prevalent at the high school level. Although there are many forms of technology at the school, students report it is difficult to access the media center during free periods. Students showed enthusiasm about the use of devices such as tablets and computers. During one classroom observation students were using a clicker device to respond to teacher questions which provided immediate feedback to the instructor and students. When the current design of curriculum documents promotes depth of understanding and application of knowledge, all students are provided with a challenging curriculum which encourages inquiry and problem solving. (teachers, classroom observations, Endicott survey, curriculum guides, student work)

There is very limited alignment between written and taught curriculum. There is currently no district policy for monitoring the alignment between the written and taught curriculum. The Curriculum Standard committee reports this process is at its beginning stages and the school is still in the developing stage of writing curriculum for some courses. However, even where there is approved written curriculum in place, adherence to the curriculum documents is not typically enforced. Curriculum committee members and teachers report the current structure of the administration is not effective in promoting and ensuring the alignment of the written curriculum and of what is delivered in the classroom. In a survey taken by the school’s fifteen department heads and administrators, only three agreed that there are structures in place to enforce adherence to the curriculum. The Curriculum committee reports the teacher evaluation plan adopted by the district does not mention curriculum on the pre- or post-observation forms. However, there is disagreement among some teachers as to an indicator which addresses curriculum during teacher evaluations. Although 61 percent of teachers feel the written and taught curricula are aligned, several teachers expressed a lack of such alignment, especially in mathematics. Thirteen of the fifteen department heads and administrators surveyed by the committee

either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “There are common assessments.” Although there is currently no evidence that departmental common assessments result in alignment between the written and taught curriculum, there is potential for curricular alignment to happen in the future. When clear alignment exists between the written and taught curriculum, teachers will ensure that all students benefit from effective and purposeful curriculum. (teachers, self-study, curriculum guides)

There is minimal curricular coordination and vertical articulation among departments and with sending schools. Although there is one standard curriculum template used by the entire district, vertical articulation has not been a focus, and there is rarely any collaboration across content areas. The Curriculum committee reports that the district’s organizational structure has impeded the practice of vertical alignment significantly. However, some district curriculum directors report their involvement in school visits and meetings at both the elementary and secondary levels to improve vertical articulation. In addition, there are plans to make changes in the structure of leadership at the district and department levels. Although some departments have directors (central office administrators who oversee the department throughout grades K-12), departments without directors have no mechanism for vertical alignment even within their own departments. In addition, while some department chairs work with their departments in grades 7-12, most work only with grades 9-12. Teachers and staff also report there is not sufficient time to meet with their peers to coordinate curriculum. A district-wide procedure for aligning standards will increase communication regarding curriculum between and among all academic areas within the school as well as with sending schools in the district. (teachers, curriculum guides, self-study)

Staffing levels, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources of the library/media center are somewhat sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. The staff is divided on whether class sizes are appropriate and sufficient for implementing the curriculum. Forty-seven percent agrees or strongly agrees that class sizes are suitable, while approximately one third of the staff disagrees or strongly disagrees. However a majority of the classes formally or informally observed seemed to have acceptable class sizes. There have been some reports of larger classes in resource periods where students need more individualization to meet with success. There are also difficulties in keeping reasonable class sizes where certain courses (such as AP courses) cannot be altered on the master schedule.

The staff is in agreement that there has been insufficient funding for some of the necessary instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, and library resources over the past three years. This lack of funding has been confirmed by building level administrators as well. Although Hamden Public Schools has spent \$125,595 on developing and improving the network capacity in the building and \$426,405 has been spent on replacing and increasing access to desktop computers and laptops in the building, teachers have little input as to the technology desired and decisions do not always meet curricular needs.

Approximately 52 percent of teachers and administrators who responded to the Curriculum committee’s survey stated that the number of classrooms is insufficient. There seems to be a lack of space for teachers to prepare materials, develop lessons, and evaluate assessments during their preparation periods. Finding space to meet quietly with students, make phone calls to parents, grade papers, and conduct other business is difficult for most teachers. Although 45 percent of teachers feel space is adequate, 86 percent of parents feel the facility meets the needs for their children.

Another concern is that maintenance has been neglected, impacting the ability of teachers to teach the curriculum. More specifically, science labs have sinks that do not drain properly and electrical outlets that do not work. In the student culinary classrooms, countertops are disintegrating and there are leaky sinks. While shadowing a student, it was observed that a stove door needed to be propped closed with a chair. Many students commented on the poor conditions of the building and materials; however teachers have reported these issues are currently being addressed on a regular basis.

Supplies and textbooks are not adequately funded in some departments. In departments with central office K-12 directors, teachers are more likely to have access to necessary supplies. Departments without directors are unable to advocate for the supplies and materials they need. According to the

Endicott survey, 88 percent of parents and 62 percent of students feel they are provided with ample instructional materials, while only 25 percent of teachers feel this way. The appropriate maintenance of classrooms and the provision of sufficient workspace and materials for teachers will increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the school community. (student shadowing, self-study, Endicott survey, teachers)

The district provides the school's professional staff with insufficient personnel, time, and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. The self-study reveals that considerable resources have been provided for the development of curriculum in the *UbD* format, however very little has been allocated for professional development on how to write or revise curriculum effectively to meet the Common Core State Standards and school's 21st century learning expectations. It was reported that \$157,850 was spent paying teachers to develop curriculum. The Endicott survey shows that 59 percent of the staff feels they need more time for professional development. This was also confirmed in teacher interviews. It has also been identified through the self-study that more time is needed for the implementation, evaluation, and revision of curriculum. Teachers, staff and the curriculum committee all stated there is currently no formal way to ensure the written curriculum is being implemented in the classrooms. The self-study also reveals more time and funding is needed to research proven methods to create and implement curriculum. Furthermore it is reported that there is no data to support whether the current structure of curriculum design is an effective method of designing and implementing curriculum. The sufficient time and resources to design and implement curriculum will lead to the development of a curriculum that is supported by research and will ensure that all students are afforded opportunity to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (teachers, curriculum guides, self-study)

Commendations:

1. The efforts of teachers to include 21st century learning expectations in the taught curriculum
2. The use of school-wide rubrics to ensure students practice and achieve the 21st century learning expectations
3. The use of the *UbD* format in the design of enriched real world problem-solving activities that relate to what students are experiencing outside the classroom
4. The availability of programs such as Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course, and the ServSafe food certification program to provide students with out of classroom opportunities
5. The access to adequate resources in the media center to support curriculum
6. The enthusiasm, willingness, and dedication of teachers and other stakeholders to design and implement an effective written curriculum in the classroom
7. The school-wide effort to improve writing as measured by the school-wide writing rubric

Recommendations:

1. Identify curriculum-specific instructional strategies to deliver content to students in the classroom
2. Revise the curriculum documents to include the application of skills and knowledge as observed in the classrooms
3. Develop a leadership structure at the department level that promotes alignment between written and taught curriculum
4. Complete the revision of the curriculum in a common format that includes units of study, 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices

5. Provide 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
6. Refurbish cooking classrooms to ensure appropriate delivery of the curriculum and a safe learning environment
7. Ensure science lab facilities support a 21st century teaching environment
8. Ensure equitable access to textbooks and supplies for all classes

3

Instruction

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

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

Conclusions

Teachers' instructional practices are inconsistently examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs and learning expectations. The practice of observing and reflecting on these foundational elements is not formally structured, systematically practiced, or continuous in all grade levels; however, Hamden High School freshman teachers do examine instructional practices to ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs. According to the Endicott survey, 63 percent of teachers report that they continuously examine their instructional practices and ensure consistency with the school's core values and beliefs about learning; however very few teachers make explicit connections between core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations and an instructional strategy they employ. School-wide rubrics were created and aligned to the learning expectations and all departments are required to incorporate the school-wide writing rubric into their lessons. All teachers have incorporated improvement of writing in their SLOs and IAGDs (related to teacher evaluation). In addition, every department has taken on the responsibility of using an additional school-wide rubric to evaluate student performance in their classes. Teachers have been told to use the rubrics as they see fit for evaluating student work. Some teachers use the rubric in combination with other analytical rubrics designed to evaluate content and others use a hybrid of both types of rubrics. When teachers' instructional practices are regularly examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations, teachers are able to design and implement instruction more consistently in order to support all student achievement of the 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, classroom observations)

Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of some of the school's 21st century learning expectations. According to the Endicott survey, 81 percent of teachers report using knowledge of their students to personalize instruction as compared to 31 percent of students. Examples of personalized instruction include having the freedom to choose the topic/concept for their 9th grade research paper, history assignments, student-created Child Development lesson plans and model selections for art. However, in many classes observed, teachers used whole-class, teacher-led instruction as their primary mode of instruction. When students were questioned about personalized learning, most students commented that teachers remain after school on a regular basis to help with comprehension of content. Some lesson plans and activity samples included differentiation based on ability level and others submitted were lessons designed for whole-class instruction. Students reported that there is choice for students based on the product they will produce; for example, they may have the ability to choose creating a PowerPoint presentation, brochure, or a Prezi.

According to the parent panel, there is some frustration with the lack of personalization related to class choice for their students; this was echoed during many student-shadowing experiences. According to both parents and students, while there are many course offerings for students, the process for selecting the level of core courses is based largely on teacher recommendation. Many parents are unclear if a process is in place where levels can be changed, and students state that if they continue to push for a change in schedule with their counselor, they may be able to change their course level. A similar point of contention is related to Advanced Placement courses. Many parents expressed that they want their students to challenge themselves and when they contract for AP courses, it is understood that if it is not an appropriate fit in terms of leveling, they can only drop down to a level 5 or 7 course based on availability, but not a level 9 (honors level) course. In discussion with both the Instruction Standard Committee and central office administrators, the logic behind this is that level 9 and AP courses are considered the same level (and therefore are weighted the same). Parents and students feel that while an AP course may be too challenging, dropping down to a level 5 or 7 is not challenging enough.

There were examples of cross-disciplinary learning in art, as students were learning about cubism and the inspiration for Picasso's *La Guernica* during World War II, and in the design and creation of the yearbook. American Studies is also listed in the as a cross-disciplinary course; however,

upon observation, the class was divided between English and history and little interaction of the content was observed. In AP Spanish, the teacher integrates persuasive writing, politics, cultural comparisons and art into the class, and students in Mythology are challenged to use storytelling and an understanding of history in order to meet course objectives. A focus at HHS is writing across the disciplines and all teachers are, therefore, responsible for improving student writing. Co-curricular activities and clubs like robotics, the school café, and student-designed and created art murals are also examples of cross-disciplinary learning.

There were few “essential questions” posted on boards or referenced during observations which help students to think big and make cross-curricular connections. Other than the freshman teachers, few teachers are given the opportunity to collaborate and plan cross-disciplinary lessons and units. An additional issue is that many teachers share classroom and board space; therefore, writing and maintaining content on the board may be difficult.

Many opportunities exist for students to become self-directed learners in the classes such as Child Development, Culinary Arts, DECA, and art. In most classrooms, though, self-directed learning is infrequently evident. While many sample lessons call for students to cognitively engage in hands-on and project-based learning, during observations and shadowing the primary method for delivering instruction is whole-group lecture which does not provide for students to engage in self-directed and active learning. Lack of cognitive engagement and a shared responsibility for learning allows for off task behavior. Students interviewed stated that many class assignments require copying notes from the board and then memorizing the notes for upcoming quizzes and tests. Students expressed that there is only one acceptable answer, and if you want to “think outside the box” you have to take a different type of class. Students do not have access to any online information as to how they are doing in their classes. At this point only parents have access.

According to the self-study, just over half of the teachers plan some of their instruction to engage students as active and self-directed learners. In the Children’s Literature class groups of students were observed editing short fiction writing pieces. Students were able to choose the subject of the narrative; however there were some examples for students who needed suggestions. Another teacher described his students as “drivers in their own academic success.” He stated that students run their own reviews with some facilitating on his part, but that through “cognitive practice” the goal is for students to be able to transfer concepts and take ownership of their own learning.” Students are given choice in the class on many assignments including illustration. Another teacher discussed that his students often group themselves, run skill groups and give constructive criticism to their group members in physical education. An additional example of active learning is in the Yearbook class, as students are given the freedom to choose a section they would like to develop.

Although 80 percent of teachers and 82 percent of parents believe that teachers emphasize inquiry, problem solving and higher order thinking in their classrooms, few classroom observations support these statistics. A few examples observed included a history teacher-led discussion comparing FDR’s First Inaugural Address with the New Deal program, a sociology lesson on customs and rituals, and a math class where students predicted the shape of complex graphs using graphing calculators. In another class, one student commented, “I didn’t think this class would be hard, but it is...in a good way. It just makes you think and I am enjoying it” when referring to her art class. The student went on to describe some of the challenging projects she has completed as she shared her portfolio. Projects included concepts such as positive and negative space, cubism and the creation of a self-portrait and black-out poetry. Many extracurricular activities and projects incorporate these skills including robotics, DECA, the Green Dragon Cafe, student-created art murals, and the reptile program. Although many curriculum documents are created using *Understanding by Design*, essential questions were not visible nor discussed during the observations.

There are many examples of applying knowledge and skills to authentic tasks. Examples include the NEASC video production, projects including positive and negative space, the cubism self-portrait, black-out poetry (creating images using words such as “sinister” to create the face of an evil-looking

man and paisley designs). The culinary program and Yearbook class provide students with additional opportunities. In geometry, students write a letter to the president of a cell phone company justifying the best location for a cell phone tower, and students in ESL classes access city bus schedules online to read schedules and purchase tickets. Students in the Green Connections course research plant science and agricultural techniques and grow a variety of plants in the student greenhouse. Authentic publication opportunities exist with the student newspaper, the *Venture* yearbook, and the *Looking Glass*, a literary magazine. According to the Endicott survey, 50.3 percent of students agree that they have an opportunity to apply what they are learning outside the classroom.

According to the Instruction Committee survey, 87 percent of teachers ask students to assess their own work. According to teachers interviewed, students assess and give feedback to each other to improve skills. However, few examples of student work or classroom observations showed that this is happening on a regular basis. One art class requires that students write a self-reflection before turning in work and a physical education teacher requires students to record progress using a tablet. Some teachers have students evaluate their writing pieces using the school-wide writing rubric. When students were asked, “In what ways do teachers seek your opinion about how classes are taught?” the only example one student could recall was completing a survey at the end of a course; all other students could not recall teachers seeking their input.

According to the Instruction Committee faculty survey, 94 percent of teachers at HHS report integrating technology into their students’ learning experiences. While most teachers require students to use technology as a presentation tool (word processing, Prezi, PowerPoint, etc.), some teachers have truly integrated technology as instructional tools in their classrooms. One teacher uses “Explain Everything” to create videos in order to flip his classroom and shift the responsibility of learning to his students. In science, some teachers instruct students in the use of Quizlet to create their own review materials; they also create various webquests to help students navigate and locate current and accurate information. Technology was also evident during many observations including the use of iPads, word processing software, graphing calculators and Beyond Question clickers. According to the Endicott survey, 61 percent of students report that they use technology in their assignments.

When teachers’ instructional practices support the achievement of the school’s 21st century learning expectations, students will be better positioned to take responsibility for their own learning and meet each of their learning expectations preparing for college or post-secondary opportunities. (teachers, self-study, student shadowing, students, classroom observations, panel presentation, student/parent handbook, Endicott survey, student work)

Some teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the needs of each student by using formative assessments, strategically differentiating, organizing group learning activities and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom. According to the self-study and teacher observations, many teachers start the class with a “do now” question. The purpose of this activity is to use it as a formative assessment to help gauge student understanding so teachers can adjust their instruction based on student responses. However, during the observations, the “do nows” were generally used as a classroom management strategy and teachers led whole-class discussions going over the problem eliciting little input from students in the process. When two students were asked the question, “How do your teachers know if you understand the material?” the students both responded that if they didn’t they would ask if they were comfortable or they would come after school for help and additional support. Neither student could think of an example of a teacher formally checking for understanding during a lesson, as they cited homework and quizzes as their only opportunity to formally let their teachers know if they understand the content.

According to the self-study, “lessons sometimes conclude with exit slips, and homework is given by most teachers to determine if students understand concepts presented.” There is little evidence of a systematic means to formatively assess student learning, and there is no indication that homework and exit slips are used to inform instruction. Nonetheless, the self-study indicates that 87 percent of teachers formatively assess their students once a week with about half doing this on a daily basis. The self-study

referenced the use of a remote clicker system to check for understanding, and this was observed in class as it was used for review. According to the self-study, the math department also uses the TAPit app to check for student understanding. It is unclear if this data is used in real time to inform instruction.

Traditional tests, quizzes, homework reviews, and class discussions are also used to determine student understanding and often cited as examples of formative assessments. The majority of teachers stated that they use this data to determine when to reteach or use direct instructional strategies or group students appropriately. The Endicott survey states that 81.3 percent of teachers feel that they differentiate their teaching practices. However, as observed and reported by professional staff, it is clear that teachers need training in what it means to formatively assess students and how to use this data to then differentiate their lessons. There are examples in the self-study of some strategic differentiation based on lexile scores using Newsela and still another example of scaffolding a vocabulary assignment based on student ability level. When Hamden High School teachers receive comprehensive training in the use of formative assessment data to differentiate instruction, they will more effectively meet the needs of all students. (self-study, Endicott survey, classroom observations, student shadowing)

Sometimes teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices. There is formal time for teachers to meet and review assessment data during PLC and department meetings, but teachers have reported that this time has been focused on writing and literacy only, and there is little time for department members to engage in meaningful discourse about student performance in order to improve instruction. Teachers express that these discussions happen informally between classes or in passing. Teachers state that there is a need to connect with colleagues in a more meaningful and formal way. While teachers have had the opportunity to calibrate their scoring using the writing rubric in PLCs and data is collected from student writing, there is no evidence that data analysis of student writing is currently being done to improve student writing. Data analysis is currently practiced in other core areas including Algebra I and in the literacy program. During the 2014-15 school year, the math specialist regularly collects and extensively analyzes data from Algebra I classes. The analysis is then shared with the math director and the data is informally shared with Algebra I teachers (via spreadsheet), but an on-site evaluation and formal reflection process is not in place. HPS has hired a data monitor to work alongside the literacy specialist to improve instruction and writing across the disciplines. The literacy specialist who was originally hired to work with the 9th grade team now has six part-time tutors who work with small groups of students each period to address identified literacy needs. These students are selected based on their performance on a writing assessment from the 8th grade and their scores from the Student Reading Inventory. Students are put into strategic groups based on student data and instruction is focused to improve student performance in many skill areas including using informational texts, comprehension, vocabulary, meta-cognition and writing. Student progress is re-evaluated at multiple points during the year. Students who earn a 3 on their writing (using the school-wide writing rubric) are removed from this Tier 2 intervention class. The data monitor and the literacy specialist work collaboratively to oversee and plan building-based PD focused on literacy.

According to the self-study, in the past, some department chairs and/or directors allotted time during some department meetings to review student work, and freshman teams use data team meetings to examine student work. No school-wide plan to review data was in place until 2014 when PLCs were established for all certified staff; however, PLC meetings are focused on improving writing only.

Parents expressed that while teachers are not proactive, they respond appropriately when parents initiate contact and offer information about their children's learning style and needs. Students are not often asked for feedback regarding instruction other than some summative surveys at the end of the course.

According to the Instruction Committee's survey approximately 40 percent of the faculty has had the opportunity to review current research about instruction. Some of this research is located in the small professional library at HHS. The principal shares sections of Marshall Memo with the staff to invoke discussion amongst staff. Providing teachers, students, and parents with greater opportunities to

discuss student performance and instructional strategies will benefit both students and teachers. (teachers, students, Endicott survey, parents)

On the whole, the teachers at Hamden High School maintain expertise in their content areas and in content-specific instructional practices. Hamden High School teachers participate in a wide variety of meetings, some of which are related to professional development. One meeting per month is a staff meeting related to school-wide issues and initiatives while two others are department meetings. The focus for the second meeting varies depending on the grade level, subject level, and whether or not there is a department head and/or a director from central office. In PLC meetings faculty members have received training in effective writing strategies, and there was district level professional development on Marzano's effective teaching strategies. According to the Instruction Committee's survey, 63.5 percent of faculty members read professional sources about instruction in their discipline, 30.5 percent has attended conferences, workshops, or taken classes about educational issues, and 35.4 percent has participated in webinars, listened to TED Talks, or used Bloomboard or other online resources about educational issues. Thirty-one percent has a professional membership and 13.5 percent subscribes to a professional journal. During the 2013-2014 school year, 70.5 percent of faculty members met with colleagues to discuss instructional practice. More than 90 percent of Hamden's faculty has an advanced degree, and approximately 47 percent has two or more master's degrees. When teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices, parents and students can be ensured that the curriculum and instruction will be relevant and applicable to 21st century skills. (self-study, teachers, school leadership committee)

Commendations:

1. The purposeful planned instruction to include higher order thinking skills in some of the classes, especially in elective courses
2. The many co-curricular opportunities that foster inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking skills
3. The creation and implementation of self-created videos to flip classrooms and support the students' understanding of concepts in some areas

Recommendations:

1. Provide more opportunities for peers to collaborate within disciplines, across disciplines, and between grade levels and schools within the district
2. Maintain science labs, foods classrooms, and other areas to positively impact teaching and learning as well as to ensure safety to all
3. Ensure that there is a formal process in place for evaluating instructional practices that align with core values, beliefs, and learning expectations
4. Investigate other cross-curricular opportunities for core courses and electives
5. Explore ways to help teachers consistently use strategies to transition their classroom from teacher-directed to student-directed instruction
6. Continue to create authentic assignments in all content areas
7. Increase the opportunities for students to reflect on the learning process
8. Provide opportunities for teachers to observe their colleagues integrating technology that enable students to drive their own learning
9. Use data analysis to implement appropriate instructional strategies



Assessment of and for Student Learning

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

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

Conclusions

Many of the professional staff use the school-wide rubrics in their courses to assess individual student achievement of school-wide learning expectations; however, although use of these rubrics has increased, department focus, primarily, on the rubrics assigned to them, and application and implementation are inconsistent. According to the Endicott survey, 48 percent of teachers state they understand the formal process for implementing school-wide rubrics; however, only 27 percent of teachers report actually using them. A follow-up survey given a year later indicated that 58 percent of teachers understood the process for implementing school-wide rubrics with 52 percent actually using them in their classrooms. As of the 2014-2015 school year, all teachers reported using the school-wide writing rubric once per marking period. Students are familiar with the rubrics, their expectations, and their use. Student interviews and assignments collected for samples have confirmed this use. However, interpretation of the rubrics is somewhat inconsistent based on samples of student work. Since this is only the second year of full implementation of these rubrics, teacher reports also show inconsistency of interpretation and use. Rubrics are divided by department so that all students are assessed across all departments in writing, with another rubric also falling within each department's purview. Many teachers also use teacher-generated rubrics in addition to these school-wide rubrics, in order to assess assignments specific to teacher's course/assignment-specific expectations, ultimately using both rubrics for feedback. Continued professional development opportunities to encourage consistent use and full implementation of school-wide rubrics will ensure that every student, regardless of course, level, or teacher, will be regularly assessed using these rubrics and the school will then be able to assess whole school as well as individual progress in a more formalized manner. (classroom observations, self-study, teachers, students)

The school's professional staff has begun research for new methods of communicating individual and school-wide progress of 21st century learning expectations to students and their families/school community; however, this communication is limited and not yet formalized. The school currently uses a program for grading (Tyler SIS) that is not readily adaptable to this form of communication. Issues with Tyler include difficult layout and accessibility as well as a lack of a user-friendly interface. Currently, the school uses a parent portal for communication with parents over student progress, but its efficacy is somewhat limited. Students are assessed using analytic rubrics; however a mechanism to use these rubrics to aid in communicating student progress has not yet been formalized. When the school develops a process to effectively report each student's progress toward achieving its 21st century learning expectations, parents and teachers can work collaboratively to ensure that these expectations are met. (self-study, teachers, parents, student work)

The professional staff collects and analyzes data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement for some student groups; however, this does not occur on a regular basis for all students. Summative assessments have been built into the K-8 curriculum, according to the principal and curriculum directors of core subject areas. Literacy specialists in the middle school use this data to provide information to assist student transition to the high school and to recommend some ninth grade students for "double English" placement, which has the same curriculum as traditional ninth grade English but is taught over two class periods. Similarly, students who need math interventions are placed in Agile Minds, an intensive double period algebra course for ninth graders.

Hamden High School has examined the percentage of minority students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses and has taken steps to address the inequities. In 2006, only 20 percent of students enrolled in AP courses were minorities, but by 2009 the percentage had increased to 31 percent. To further address this inequity, HHS received a grant from the NEA in 2010 to focus on increasing non-traditional student representation in AP courses, including addressing ways to identify and support minority students. Students were provided supports which included a summer institute, progress

monitoring, and after-school tutoring. As a result, there has been a noticeable growth in minority students enrolled in AP courses.

In the ninth grade, teachers across subject areas discuss and/or share data or assessment strategies bi-weekly in teams. These teams have common planning time (PLCs) during which students' academic, attendance and discipline data as well as assessment information are shared. Data collected may result in a variety of responses by staff including student schedule modifications as well as referrals to the freshman student support center, the alternative learning program, or the special education evaluation team. According to the Endicott survey, teachers report that 87 percent analyzes their individual student work to identify inequities in student achievement. However, there are no other grade level data teams and teachers express frustration that there is not a forum to review student data in a meaningful way beyond the ninth grade. There is a vertical data team which includes representatives from each department, an administrator, a literacy specialist, and a data team coordinator. This team has focused primarily on the implementation of the writing rubric and consistency in scoring student writing across disciplines. More time for professional development for teachers to analyze data and more consistent data collection, analysis, and use in grades 10-12 will ensure that student inequities and needs are more quickly and consistently addressed and intervention or enrichment strategies will be better implemented. (panel presentation, self-study, teachers, Endicott survey)

Prior to each unit of study, teachers often communicate to students the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific goals to be assessed; however, there is still some lack of clarity as to the meaning and implementation of 21st century skills. Each classroom prominently displays a poster of the school's academic, social and civic expectations. Despite the presence of these posters, Endicott results indicate that these expectations are unclear to students with only 57 percent reporting that teachers explain what learning expectations will be addressed within each unit of study. Since that time, teachers have modified their practice to communicate the relevant 21st century learning expectations prior to each unit of study. Many teachers communicate school-wide expectations as well as their own assignment-specific expectations to increase rigor or confirm student understanding of specific assignments. As a result, assignments are often graded using multiple rubrics leaving students somewhat confused as to what the teacher is really looking for. Some teachers give similar assignments over a period of multiple occasions to help model skills and improve student learning, understanding of expectations, and familiarity with school-wide rubrics.

Students feel that expectations are generally clear prior to completion of assessments and that teachers use rubrics consistently to show expectations and provide feedback. Improved communication and collaboration time among teachers will help to consistently define 21st century learning expectations for students and will clarify the use of these skills and their role in student instruction and assessment. (classroom observations, teachers, students, self-study)

Prior to summative assessments, teachers extensively provide students with the corresponding rubrics. Students are familiar with the school-wide rubrics and are aware of the expectations they represent. According to the Endicott survey, 73 percent of students understand in advance, "what work I have to accomplish to meet my teacher's expectations." Students report rubrics are always given in advance when they are used with an assignment. One student said when she reviewed the rubric in class along with the teacher it was very helpful. Teachers also use assignment-specific rubrics in addition to school-wide rubrics. Curriculum directors report that teachers are encouraged by administrators to use rubrics that best fit the purpose of assignments; some use assignment-specific and school-wide rubrics in conjunction so teacher expectations are more apparent; some use rubrics for point value and some for overall holistic or feedback purposes only. Continued professional development on the use of rubrics will allow for more consistency in use for students and will provide improved school-wide application for student progress reporting and instruction. (students, teachers, student work, Endicott survey)

For units of study, teachers sometimes employ a range of assessment strategies; however, teachers sometimes seem unclear as to the difference between formative and summative assessment. Due to a lack of professional development pertaining to assessment, teachers do not clearly recognize

assessments as formative or summative even though they do indicate using a wide variety of instructional strategies. Some departments seem to be more knowledgeable than others in regards to assessment terminology.

In a survey conducted by the members of the Assessment Standard Committee, 88 percent of teachers utilize summative assessments with 77 percent saying they used them frequently. Ten percent of teachers surveyed indicate that they never use summative assessment to evaluate student work and understanding. Examples of summative assessments used include state tests, district benchmarks, performance tasks, end of chapter/unit tests, midterms and final exams. Thirty-two percent of teachers collaborated on one or more common formative or summative assessments while 58 percent of teachers indicate that they have not been involved in the development of common assessments.

Survey data shows that 86 percent of teachers use formative assessments to evaluate student work and understanding. Sixty percent of teachers state they use some variety of formative assessment twice or more per week while 27 percent of teachers report using some variety of formative assessment only once or twice per month. Discussions with teachers indicate their definition of formative assessments was varied, from teacher observations to performance tasks, to entrance/exit slips and cold call questioning. Some assessments that were labeled formative appear more summative in nature. Professional development to provide a universal understanding of formative and summative assessments, and encourage their appropriate use in the classroom will help teachers ensure that all students make adequate progress toward achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (classroom observations, student work, self-study, teachers)

Teachers in some areas collaborate in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments; however, the majority of teachers have limited opportunities to collaboratively create, analyze, or revise assessments. Some departments use their monthly meeting time to create and revise common assessments, which are for the most part midterm and final exams. Although some opportunities to collaborate exist during professional development days, department meetings and common planning time, over 50 percent of teachers report having limited opportunities to create assessments collaboratively. Teachers in the freshman academy; however, are afforded ample time to collaborate during bi-weekly team meetings. During these meetings teachers in the four core courses create, grade, analyze, and revise text dependent questions that are applied to the school-wide writing rubric. Increased professional development time to give more opportunity for all teachers to improve and implement strategies to analyze, formalize, and revise formative and summative assessments will ensure students ample opportunities to show their attainment of the school's 21st century learning expectations. (classroom observations, teachers, self-study)

Teachers frequently provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. However, type of feedback and ability to revise is inconsistent and does not always apply school-wide rubrics. Endicott survey results indicate that 73 percent of parents feel that teachers provide timely and corrective feedback to their students to assist in revising and improving assignments. A common technique used by teachers at HHS is "cold call" questioning which is utilized by 90 percent of the faculty. A majority of teachers report collecting and correcting daily homework assignments to provide students with the opportunity to improve their learning. Others report techniques that provide opportunity for feedback include critiqued board work, exit slips, "do nows," announced and unannounced quizzes and group discussions.

Many teachers allow students the opportunity to submit an essay or paper prior to the due date in order to receive feedback on the assignment before revising. Others encourage students to complete problems on the board for the class to critique and revise. Some teachers allow students to retake tests until they demonstrate proficiency. Hamden High School also has several learning labs including a math lab, writing lab, art lab, freshman support center and computer labs which are staffed by teachers and designed to support students who need additional help or desire more focused feedback.

Some samples of student work showed the use of student reflection to show understanding but did not include the ability to revise. Many teachers use assignment-specific rubrics to personalize

feedback in conjunction with school-wide rubrics. However, the feedback between them does not always match or show consistency. Increased opportunities for student revision and use of feedback to improve their work and continued professional development on use of school wide-rubrics will ensure that students have every opportunity to meet school-wide learning expectations. (teachers, students, student work)

Teachers regularly use formative assessments to inform their instruction; however, a more formalized approach to data analysis and collaboration would provide teachers an opportunity to better adapt instruction to improve student learning. A committee-generated survey indicates that 96 percent of teachers regularly use formative assessment to inform their instruction with 50 percent doing so at least once a week. One example of formative assessment from the social studies department is a pre-test to determine prior knowledge before beginning a unit on Egypt. After the pre-test was administered, teachers collaborated to determine the course of instruction. When teachers learned that more than half of the students lacked previous knowledge in distinguishing Egyptian cultures from other ancient cultures, they were able to plan appropriately for the unit. At the conclusion of the unit, teachers used the same assessment to determine if their instruction was successful in teaching students about ancient Egypt. In the math department teachers use skill inventories to determine proficiency and mastery of concepts from prior courses before a unit begins. In a geometry course, an assessment was used to determine if a review of algebra skills was needed before delving into the geometry material.

According to committee's survey, 86 percent of teachers regularly analyze student performance on formative assessments to revise instruction. In addition, 45 percent report analyzing common formative assessments as a department. Teachers report making changes in their lessons such as re-teaching smaller sequences of steps, differentiating instruction, providing graphic organizers as a result of data obtained formative assessments. An increase in professional development to encourage collaboration among teachers on formative assessments will also help to ensure awareness of student needs and improve future instruction for students. (classroom observations, student work, teachers, students, self-study)

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of improving instructional practice; however, the process is not completely structured and formalized, especially regarding the revision of curriculum. According to a survey given by the Assessment Committee, 87 percent of teachers regularly analyze student performance data to revise instructional practices. However, less than half of teachers report that they analyze student performance data for the purpose of revising their department's curriculum. Teachers report that collaboration time is limited; there are some opportunities for collaboration but not consistently across all grade levels. Ninth grade teachers meet bi-weekly to analyze data and discuss assessment. Professional learning communities (PLCs) composed of 8-10 interdisciplinary teachers have been established; however, these teachers meet only once per month and those meetings are rarely used to examine and revise curriculum.

Student work is assessed in multiple settings by teachers and administrators. All staff members currently use the school-wide writing rubric and one other rubric assigned by department to assess student work. Student work samples have been closely examined and catalogued by an individual staff member for the purpose of providing individualized feedback; however, these work samples have not yet been analyzed collaboratively by staff members either to revise curriculum or to improve instructional practices. The focus of the recently formed PLCs is to examine student work and to develop common assessments as well as to devise instructional strategies and classroom lessons.

Common assessments are given by most departments across homogeneous courses in the form of midterm or final exams, chapter or unit tests, and performance tasks. An example of a common performance task is an English research assignment that is given to all ninth graders. Common assessments in English and math are written in alignment with the Common Core Standards. However, other departments are still wrestling with this issue using premade tests from the textbook companies as

common assessments. Individual and school-wide progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations is not currently being examined or used to drive instruction or curriculum.

Standardized assessment results are examined but not for the purpose of revising curriculum. AP test scores are examined by individual teachers for the purpose of improving instructional practices. Prior to the elimination of the CAPT, teachers and administrators analyzed school progress with the purpose of providing supplemental instruction to prepare freshmen and sophomores to take the test.

Data from sending schools is examined in most cases as students transition from Hamden Middle School to the high school, as well as when students transfer from other high schools out of district. Eighth graders are given a math placement exam to determine algebra placement. Freshmen and sophomores are also screened to determine if they need a supplemental literacy course. Also, data from schools out of district is examined by school counseling staff to determine placement. However, curriculum is not examined or revised based on data from sending schools and post-secondary institutions. A broader range of data collection as well as more time for professional development for teachers to analyze data, and more consistent data collection and analysis will ensure that student needs are more quickly and consistently addressed and intervention or enrichment strategies will be more effectively implemented. (student work, classroom observations, teachers, students, self-study)

Hamden High School is working to review, revise, and ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning; however, grading, reporting practices, and understanding of the core values and their impact needs to be consistent. In 2009, HHS began using the Tyler Student Information System grad reporting software (Tyler SIS). This was a comprehensive change in teacher practice across all disciplines that required the use of an electronic grade book as opposed to merely posting quarterly final grades to a computer system. Tyler SIS also provides a parent portal through which parents can monitor student progress on a regular basis. School policy requires teachers to update their grades a minimum of every two weeks although many provide updates on a more frequent basis.

The faculty of HHS has developed school-wide 21st century learning expectations as well as school-wide analytic rubrics. These rubrics are used to assess creativity, problem-solving, information literacy, reading and writing, and civic and social expectations that reflect the school's core values and beliefs about learning. Teacher use of the rubrics is widespread, but the interpretation of these rubrics is not always consistent. Teacher interviews and sample student work shows discrepancies in school-wide rubric use and meaning when compared to teacher-generated rubrics. There is a lack of consistency in using rubrics (primarily the writing rubric) and in way rubrics are worded among different teachers/assignments. Data collected from these rubrics to determine the school's adherence to its core values and beliefs about student learning has not been analyzed at this time.

Teachers are still primarily using the writing rubric and one other assigned to their department rather than looking at all school-wide rubrics for possible use. Students are not clearly aware of what the core values of the school mean or how they relate to the school-wide rubrics. They report being given a copy of the core values at the start of the year but do not demonstrate full understanding of their meaning or how they relate to grading practices. While a review of syllabi indicate a variety of grading practices, they are overwhelmingly traditional in nature utilizing either a point system, percentage system or a combination of both. It is often unclear how a student's score on a rubric will affect his/her grade or even if it is factored into the grade for the project at all. Teacher expectations and classroom policies vary greatly between and among instructors within the same department. Utilizing consistent grading practices throughout the school as well as communicating a clear alignment of grading and reporting practices with the school's core values and beliefs about learning will assure parents and other stakeholders that students are attaining the 21st century learning expectations. (classroom observations, student work, student shadowing, parents, teachers, students, self-study)

Commendations:

1. The parent access to student performance through the use of the Tyler SIS
2. The corresponding rubrics, teacher generated and school-wide, that are provided to students prior to formative and summative assessments
3. The feedback that is provided to students to ensure understanding of expectations, assessment, and revision possibilities for their work in the present and future
4. The learning labs which are staffed by teachers and designed to support students who need additional help or desire more focused feedback
5. The practice of giving common assessments in like courses

Recommendations:

1. Offer professional development to justify the connection between the rubric assessment and the grade assigned to the student
2. Provide more professional development opportunities for teachers to consistently use and interpret school-wide rubrics
3. Extend use of PLCs to allow more time for teacher collaboration to encourage similar interventions and discussions as are present in the ninth grade teams
4. Collect and analyze student performance data after the ninth grade to help inform instruction, curriculum, and assessment
5. Provide more opportunities for students to revise or use feedback to improve their work
6. Align grading and reporting practices to the school's core values, beliefs, and expectations

SUPPORT STANDARDS

SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

SCHOOL RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

5

School Culture and Leadership

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

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

Conclusions

The Hamden High School community has made significant strides in recent years to build a safe, positive, respectful, and supportive culture. There are ample opportunities for students to participate in school activities, as evidenced by the students who participated in the opening reception as parts of the Reptile Club, orchestra, culinary program, and theater department. While the self-study indicates that there has been a decrease in the number of disciplinary referrals, teachers express concerns about a growing amount of disrespectful and defiant student behaviors. According to teachers there has been an inconsistency in how student behaviors are handled among the building's administrators. In February 2014, the school moved from two in-school suspension rooms to one and has also initiated a new alternative to suspension program to further build on the idea of a supportive culture that fosters student responsibility and leads to a safer environment. Parents, staff, and students all commented on the improved level of security at the school. Seven security guards on duty every day in the building perform tasks related to school safety and environment. A video surveillance system with cameras positioned throughout the school has been installed. Security personnel and administrators review footage as needed.

Among teachers there is a question about the level of respect students show staff members and each other. On the Endicott survey, only 23.6 percent of students report that students respect one another, and only 29.3 percent of students feel that students respect their teachers. Students are able to access teachers through office hours, the math lab, and the freshman support center. The parent portal is a vital tool for parents to keep up with their children's academic progress and needs. Along with athletics there are 54 clubs that give students many avenues to find pride and ownership in the school environment. Certain organizations are structured to build a positive school culture, while promoting safety and positive social/emotional behaviors. The House Leadership Council, Human Relations Club, Student Council, STTOP (Students Teaching Tolerance Openness and Pride), SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), Peer Tutoring, Green Dragon Enterprises, and Key Club represent organizations specifically aimed at improving the school climate. When safety is taken seriously and students have multiple opportunities to be involved in the school, students are able to become socially, culturally, and globally aware in their futures as well as become civically active and productive. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, teachers, parents, school leadership committee)

Hamden High School is somewhat equitable and inclusive and ensures access to challenging academic experiences for some students but the school is not making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, does not foster heterogeneity, and these practices do not support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. There are some opportunities for heterogeneous courses for students. Currently, every student over the course of the high school experience is enrolled in a minimum of a half-year heterogeneously grouped Civics course during their sophomore year. Classes are offered on three levels of instruction: level 9 (honors), level 7 (college preparatory) and level 5 (general) as well as a number of Advanced Placement courses. At this time Hamden High School does not have a required core course that is heterogeneously grouped, however, the curriculum offers students many opportunities that are multileveled. This includes elective classes in the English, social studies, science, practical arts, fine arts, and physical education departments. Although 71 percent of students report in the Endicott survey that they have, "a number of opportunities to take courses in which students of varying levels of ability are enrolled," there is no transcript data that clearly defines the number of students who participate in a multileveled class in their high school career.

The heterogeneously grouped courses are inclusive of one or more level choices within the course and students must declare at which level they will be assessed. The only course that is heterogeneous and not multileveled is the physical education course. There is concern among students and staff about the impact a truly heterogeneous class will have on GPA and student ranking for college

acceptance purposes. Review of the program of studies indicates that there are many courses offered in all disciplines that may be multileveled. There is concern among some staff that the current grouping patterns do not ensure that all students, regardless of ability level, have challenging learning experiences that enable them to achieve the school's learning expectations. Additionally, there are patterns that reflect racial and socio-economic disparity in the leveling opportunities afforded to students. In other words, staff state concern that there is not balanced diversity of enrollment in all courses so that students considered to be part of a minority population are not homogeneously grouped. Part of that concern is that not all parents understand the leveling and scheduling process and as a result may not advocate for their children.

There are also many co-taught courses that include a regular education teacher and a special education teacher who collaborate in planning lessons and meeting student needs. Co-planning for these classes may or may not be supported with formal common planning time for teachers. When there are high expectations for all students supported by personalized and differentiated instruction in a heterogeneous learning environment, all students can succeed academically and socially. (self-study, Endicott survey, parents, teachers, students)

The Hamden High School community has made an effort to create an on-going program through which each student has an adult, in addition to the school counselor, who assists the student in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. While there is an advisory program, Connections, it is still in the development stages. Evidence from the self-study provides evidence of the need for this program and how it is intended to help prepare students socially and emotionally. Based on the Endicott survey, only 33 percent of students think that Hamden High School provides a caring school climate. In addition, only 29 percent of students surveyed feel that their parents or other adults model positive, responsible behavior, and 50 percent says both parents and teachers encourage them to do well in school. Because of this the Connections curriculum is designed by staff members to help students focus on academic reflection and goal setting, career choices, budgeting, judgment of others, public decorum, restraint, civility and safety, among other things. The evidence showed that the lessons are aligned with the Connecticut expectations for Student Success Plans. Due to the new nature of the program, there has been frequent transition in the groupings. Students discussed the changing nature of their groups and advisors. They expressed that has made it difficult for them to find motivation and support in the program.

The program was piloted during the 2012-13 school year. Parents shared that they do not fully understand the program or its purpose in improving their students. The self-study indicates that the curriculum will change again next year as it will more closely align with the College Board curriculum for juniors and seniors. When students have multiple staff members at a school that they feel support them socially and emotionally, they are more prepared to face the various challenges that they face both in school and in deciding their futures. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, teachers, parents, school leadership committee)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff infrequently engage in professional discourse for reflection. Teachers are provided with three full-day and five half-day professional development opportunities throughout the year. Professional development over the past couple of years has included the new teacher evaluation protocol, the Common Core of Teaching Domains, NEASC, Marzano's instructional strategies and *Understanding by Design*. The collective spirit of reflective inquiry does exist within the faculty, but staff expresses concern with the limited time available to collaborate with their colleagues.

The professional staff at HHS is provided with three hours per month meeting time; however the staff indicates that there is usually a preplanned agenda that does not allow time for staff to engage in professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning. Teachers state that they often collaborate informally in the hallway during passing time and when they share classroom space with a colleague. Some departments stated that they have an open door policy for colleagues who want to observe instruction and that some teachers take advantage of that opportunity. Although there is

a district professional development committee that includes teachers from all grade levels and disciplines, the Endicott survey indicates that 52.5 percent of teachers do not believe the school's professional development programs enables teachers to acquire and use skills to improve instruction and assessment, and teachers feel they have little or no input into the choice of professional development topics.

In response to the Endicott survey, interdisciplinary PLC teams were developed this year and there has been considerable focus in the PLC teams to collaborate on the use of the school-wide writing rubric. This is a school-wide goal that is part of each teacher's evaluation and support plan. Additionally, there is a freshman academy structure that allows for content teachers, administration, and support staff to collaborate on academic and behavioral interventions for students in grade 9.

Teachers do feel that they are supported by the administration; however, they voice concern that there are still discrepancies in the implementation and scoring of rubrics between departments and among teachers and that it results in variation in expectations for students. According to the self-study report and teacher interviews, resources outside the school are used to further professional development for staff, but it is not a widespread practice and is more dependent upon teacher interest and personal relationships to the organizations or colleges. To maintain current with best practices, some teachers have attended outside professional development workshops provided by sources that include CREC (Capital Region Education Council), ACES (Area Cooperative Educational Services), and discipline-specific associations such as NSTA (National Science Teachers Association), and partnerships with Yale, Quinnipiac and Southern Connecticut State Universities. The following departmental opportunities to engage in professional development exist, but teachers state that few take advantage on a large scale: visiting other schools to observe programs of interest, workshops, lectures, and conferences aimed at enhancing teaching strategies. There is inconsistency between departments in regards to outside professional development opportunities. Teachers have stated that they can apply for conferences out of district and that there are sometimes approved but that budget freezing occurs almost yearly impedes that process.

The principal often shares via email timely readings that result in additional professional discourse or teacher reflection around important topics that impact instruction and student learning outcomes. Additionally, all staff members are provided professional training around Carol Dweck's, *Mindset* and were given Robert Marzano's, *Classroom Instruction that Works*, to provide additional instructional support in the classroom. When the principal and professional staff have opportunities to engage in professional discourse and access timely professional development, they will be better equipped to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. (Endicott survey, teachers, students, school leadership committee, self-study)

The HHS school leadership utilizes a comprehensive teacher evaluation program that formally and informally assesses the strengths and areas of focus for teachers in order to support student academic success. Teachers express a strong belief in the principal's support of them as instructional leaders in the classroom. They feel he supports their efforts to gauge student understanding based on classroom instruction versus state assessments. The administrators brought in Todd White for professional development on effective teacher evaluation and have worked with others in the district to calibrate observation protocol and evaluation reports. They have continued this training throughout the school year on a monthly basis. The teacher evaluation plan follows a modified version of the Connecticut SEED model. It includes goal setting, formal observations, and informal observations and involves all certified positions at the school. Multiple measures are used to generate a comprehensive representation of teacher performance. Teachers are evaluated among four categories which fall into two focus areas: Teacher Practice and Student Outcomes. Teacher Practice Indicators are comprised of two categories: observation of teacher performance and practice and parent feedback. Within these indicators, teachers are evaluated on the successful implementation of core instructional practices and skills that help to advance student learning. Student growth and development and student feedback fall within the Student Outcomes Indicators, in which teachers are evaluated based on indicators of student

academic progress and student feedback. Scores are combined from each of the categories resulting in an annual summative performance rating. The four levels of summative performance ratings are “Exemplary, Accomplished, Developing, or Below Standard.” When teacher growth and student academic success is supported, the school’s leadership team is able to promote a professional environment that encourages collaboration and constructive dialogue. (self-study, teachers, School Leadership Committee)

The organization of time often supports research-based instruction and the learning needs of all students, but does not always allow for professional collaboration among teachers. There is an annual review of the master schedule, which focuses on student and teacher needs. An in-depth study was conducted and a daily homeroom is being considered, although block periods and a rotating schedule will not be implemented. The current schedule is an eight period day with four lunch waves running from periods five through eight. Students state that all students are scheduled for a lunch period but that students can pick up a class instead and forgo a scheduled lunch to increase their ability to take courses. They also state that students in lab classes must agree to miss lunch or physical education once a week to accommodate a lab period. Students state that teachers are very flexible about accommodating student needs to provide the opportunity for additional learning experiences.

The current master schedule allows for alternative learning experiences, assessments and education that are not limited to the classroom. In order to reach students who struggle with traditional education, there are other options for students who qualify, including homebound tutoring or placement into the Hamden Collaborative Learning Center. The school has done an outstanding job of creating engaging and active learning experiences where students may apply learning in authentic, real-world circumstances. This is evidenced by the school store run by the DECA club, the Reptile Club, the culinary program and the automotive classes. Students show great pride in these programs and feel they are being prepared for their future career goals.

The school also has a well-defined ninth grade academy that is organized so that students share a common team of teachers, a designated ninth grade counselor, and administrator. Professional staff, including administrators, school counselors, social workers, and psychologists, meet weekly during freshman and house team meetings to discuss students of concern. Parents state that they appreciate the personalized approach and the timely communication that results in immediate intervention for their struggling student. In addition to the freshman team, the school is broken down into four houses that are aimed at enhancing student personalization. Parents and students both agree that teachers take a vested interest in their learning and that they would like to see the communication and intervention continue through the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade years. When the organization of time supports researched-based instruction, conditions are created where all students can achieve at high levels. (self-study, parents, teachers, students)

The class sizes at HHS allow a sufficient time for teachers to provide a personalized and rigorous academic environment for all students. On average the class data shows that class size for core courses is 25 students per class. These numbers vary based on the department and the classroom space required for certain courses that need labs. Based on conversations with teachers, a few courses have larger class sizes that make effective teaching difficult. The enrollment in the classes helps dictate the time required to ensure instruction is personalized for all students. Students express that they feel there is a difference in the class size for lower leveled courses versus higher leveled courses. Their experiences showed that the classes seemed smaller in the higher leveled courses. When class sizes are manageable and equitable across all levels and courses, students are able to demonstrate responsible personal behaviors, and will achieve self-reliance in order to obtain college/career readiness skills. (self-study, teachers, student/parent handbook, students)

The principal, working with other building leaders, frequently provides instructional leadership that is rooted in the school’s core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The current HHS principal started in the 2006-2007 school year. Since that time he has enthusiastically pursued a program of engagement with students, parents, and staff. He actively participates in a wide variety of organizations

and initiatives focused on the promotion of teaching and learning. In the building, he consults with the five assistant principals currently working at Hamden High as well as the chairs of the various academic departments. All of these individuals have had a hand in helping to shape the core values and beliefs about learning. Staff indicates that the principal has made great efforts to focus their professional energy on fewer initiatives so that, as a staff, they can achieve success in those areas of effort. This includes the goal of implementing the school-wide writing rubric in all disciplines and the creation of PLC's to support the collaboration and calibration to make that happen. Although there are not clearly defined mechanisms for consistent faculty input to the principal, he has been receptive to suggestions from staff and to data from the Endicott survey, which resulted in the adoption of PLC time for all faculty members.

The self-study report and teacher interviews indicate that the principal makes decisions that are based on the core values and beliefs about learning. Examples of this include the many school-based administrator meetings focused specifically on teaching and learning; the principal's initiatives that have resulted in the creation of academic teams to focus on aiding previously underachieving students in the ninth and tenth grades; and the collaboration with leaders of other schools in the district to add aid in expanding the established core values, beliefs, and expectations for learning that presently exist throughout the district. Additionally, there has been active engagement with students and parents to project the core value that learning is paramount, an ongoing effort on the principal's behalf to foster an open and direct communication with the faculty at large both to garner input and to provide educational information. Also, the principal's participation in activities within the state legislature and coordination of various functions serve to present school-related information to the town of Hamden.

Although the principal and many staff understand and implement the core values, beliefs and expectations for learning, there is not yet widespread understanding and internalization of those values and beliefs throughout the entire staff and the the student and parent population. When the principal and building leadership provide instructional leadership that is grounded in the core values, beliefs and expectations for student learning, all stakeholders including faculty, parents, and students will work collaboratively for the collective success of all students at Hamden High School. (self-study, parents, teachers, students)

The HHS school community offers many opportunities for student involvement and encourages their feedback, while actively seeking to engage parents and the local community in the school environment. The students have many opportunities to be involved both formally and informally. Students feel that they are supported by the administration and that concerns are taken seriously. Specific examples were given of how seniors felt they were unfairly being made to write more essays than the other grades for testing the new school-wide writing rubric. The administration listened and adapted the requirements to be more fairly distributed. Formally students have many options to have their voice heard in the decision-making process. For example, the student representative on the Hamden Board of Education, Student Advisory, and Student Government have an impact on school-wide decisions. Surveys are given through homeroom and the advisory program that give students a voice in school-wide decisions. The Endicott survey shows that 81.2 percent of teachers have participated on a school committee. Some of these committees include areas that involve curriculum, student behavior management, vertical data, freshman data, student assessment, hiring, technology, community, and school culture. In contrast, 46.4 percent of teachers do not feel that their input matters when important school-wide decisions are made. Teachers expressed both in conversations and as part of the self-study that while they are encouraged to be on committees, these groups do not take an active role in the decision-making process of the school. There is a lack of understanding of the role many of these committees play in the whole-school structure. Teachers explained that surveys are frequently given for key structural and systematic elements of the school, but the results are not always explained or focused on their perceived needs for school improvement.

The primary source of parental impact on school-wide decision-making is the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA). PTSA members, while extremely active and involved, represent a small

portion of the parental community. Many committees or school members interested in parental input refer to the PTSA for feedback. Attendance at board of education meetings affords parents the opportunity to express their opinions on board's decisions. Parents are also asked for input through surveys. When students, parents, and teachers have a voice in the decision-making process both formally and informally, structures and systems of the school are driven based on the best interests of student growth and are reflective of the whole-school community. (Endicott survey, self-study, students, teachers, parents)

Teachers sometimes exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. There are some committees that exist at both the school and district level for teachers and administrators to collaborate and create solutions that increase student engagement in learning. Not all teachers are aware of committee opportunities that are available to provide them a voice in decision-making and would allow them to play a role in leadership in the school community with respect to issues related to instruction, curriculum, student outcomes, adherence to school policies, and in using data to direct policies and decisions. Some teachers do exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. The opportunities that exist include the freshman teams which focus on data and student work as well as addressing student behavior issues and concerns; hiring committees for new administrators or teachers; vertical data team/PLC that is currently working on improving the instruction and assessment of writing across the curriculum; and the PTSA committee for facilitating communication and coordination between parents and teachers at Hamden High School. Additionally, teachers provide leadership for the Connections program which provides activities and direction for the advisor/advisee program; the Hamden Alternative to Suspension (HATS) program which seeks alternatives to traditional disciplinary action and works in conjunction with the Juvenile Review Board; the TEAM (Teacher Education and Mentoring Program) mentor committee that supports new teachers and their mentors; and the NEASC Steering Committee that directs the efforts of staff in implementing strategies for the self-study and provides guidance and leadership through the process of NEASC visitation and 54 teacher-led clubs.

The self-study indicated results from a committee-generated survey that appeared to contradict itself. Results indicated that 72 percent of staff members are very likely or somewhat likely to offer solutions for school-related issues. However, only 50 percent of those surveyed state they would share their concerns with the building principal. At the same time, 61 percent say they would share a concern with an administrator. What was consistently communicated is that at this time there is not a formal avenue for teachers to collectively voice their concerns as a staff as monthly staff meetings with the building principal have full agendas with a focus on student learning and instruction with little time for discussing current concerns or issues. The self-study indicates that there was once both a school improvement team and a superintendent's Advisory Committee, but the school improvement group was disbanded several years ago.

There are many teachers in both formal and informal teacher leadership roles. There are 19 literacy leaders lead by one literacy specialist and a data monitor, 54 club advisors, five freshman team leaders, and department chairs for English, math, social studies, world languages, fine arts and business departments. School improvement and increased student engagement in learning will result when teachers take an active leadership role and have a voice in decision-making about strategies that support student success. (self-study, teachers, students)

The HHS school board, superintendent, and principal work together to ensure that the resources and communication needed are a two-way dialogue focused on student growth. The relationships between the current superintendent and both the principal and school board are still growing as they have only been working together for one school year. Teachers express that there have been many transitions within these relationships over the course of the self-study process and ensuing NEASC re-accreditation visit. As an example of the collaboration, the chairman of the board cites the RAISES (Rigorous Achievable Instructional Standards for Every Student) program, an initiative designed to

increase participation in AP classes at HHS. The program was created with feedback from both board members and district leadership. Another successful collaboration is the effort to improve technology at the high school with the addition of new computers and projectors, and the enhancement of Wi-Fi in the building. This has required district and school staff to plan and work together.

The principal cites the successful creation of a freshman program which has been in place for four years as an example of his work with the previous superintendent. He also cites his involvement in the search for and interviewing of candidates for the new superintendent position as evidence of collaboration with the school board. The principal states that he attends regular BOE meetings. He indicates that during discussions about the high school's budget, he is often asked to find ways to make cuts due to declining enrollments, but he is not asked to discuss long-term budgeting plans. However based on the reports, both the superintendent and the board believe they extend significant discretion in HHS budgeting issues to the principal. The superintendent's office finalizes hiring based on the recommendations of the high school principal. There is evidence indicating that the board members have also been involved in the hiring of some athletic positions. Overall, the board and the principal have a respectful and constructive relationship, and the relationship between the superintendent and principal is mostly constructive and collaborative. When there is a collaborative and productive relationship between and among school board members, the superintendent, and the high school principal, the school will function more smoothly with a focus on student growth and success. (self-study, teachers, school leadership committee, central office administrators, school board)

The school board and superintendent sometimes provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school in regards to teaching and learning. The high school principal's job description specifically addresses teaching and learning as it states that the principal's responsibilities include: "Directs the overall management of the school including academic, co-curricular, and support programs through the coordination of the administrative staff and Instructional Leaders..." and "Directs long range planning processes that identify needs, implement appropriate plans, and assess results in order to develop a culture of continuous improvement." Additionally, the Job Goal is stated as: "In accordance with the Board policies and administrative regulations, provide leadership and vision for the total high school program in order to establish a nurturing, respectful educational environment in which all students can achieve academic and personal excellence."

These guidelines afford the principal the authority to implement his plan for improvement and to move forward the core values, beliefs, and expectations for student learning and has resulted in several initiatives that have been recognized (by the board of education) for improving the quality of education at the high school. These initiatives would include the RAISES program and freshman academy as well as the school-wide writing goal and Vertical Team/PLC committees that increase teacher collaboration around that goal. The principal is provided less decision-making authority in regards to budget and curriculum. Curriculum is directed and led by department chairs and directors. According to the self-study, the budget authority of the principal lies mostly in prioritizing budget cuts. The principal has continued to work productively with the board members through transition of positions as well as with the transition of a new superintendent. The board has also made reference to staff and scheduling items for which the principal's input is greatly valued. When the school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school, then progress can be achieved in establishing the core values and beliefs throughout the school community and achieving expectations for student learning for all students. (self-study, teachers, students, school leadership committee, central office administrators)

Commendations:

1. The freshman academy's examination of student learning and instructional practice

2. The efforts of the school and district leadership to ensure a safe school environment through a camera surveillance system and increased security staff
3. The numerous opportunities provided to students both in the course offerings and in extracurricular activities
4. The involvement of all school personnel in creating a school culture and an environment that promotes 21st century learning expectations
5. The implementation of interdisciplinary PLC time each month to increase collaboration and professional dialogue around the school-wide writing rubric
6. The flexibility of the schedule, students, and staff for providing additional learning opportunities within the school day
7. The extended learning opportunities through curricular programs and clubs that support student learning pathways and future career goals
8. The involvement of students in the decision-making processes both in informal and formal means allowing them to feel ownership in the school
9. The decision-making authority provided to the principal by the board of education and the superintendent to act as the instructional leader for HHS

Recommendations:

1. Maintain consistency and open communication in dealing with student behaviors and teacher communications
2. Create more heterogeneously grouped core courses that foster heterogeneity, inclusiveness, and equity
3. Ensure that all levels of courses reflect the diversity of the student body
4. Evaluate the process by which students select course levels and are recommended for courses to ensure equal access to rigorous experiences for all students
5. Ensure that all stakeholders, including parents and students understand and are active in the process of choosing courses and making leveling decisions
6. Encourage students to be a part of the development and planning of the advisory program to ensure their motivation and engagement
7. Create opportunity for teachers at the high school to have a voice that can inform the principal and professional development committee about the learning needs of staff to improve student-learning outcome
8. Include the building principal in decisions regarding curriculum writing and the budget development process

6

School Resources for Learning

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

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

7. Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the ADA, and English language learners, have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who:
- collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations
 - provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students
 - perform ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations.

Conclusions

The school has extensive timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, to support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. Students access interventions primarily through the house structure of the school. HHS is divided into four houses; one for the 9th graders and three for students grades 10-12. Each house consists of a team of professional staff, including an administrator, guidance counselors, social workers and/or psychologists. The 9th grade team meets weekly and will develop interventions for at-risk 9th graders. This has been a very successful model and has improved the 9th grade retention rate. For students at-risk of failing, additional interventions include scheduling PPTs, referring students to academic support classes, and meeting with parents and teachers. A more intensive intervention is to refer chronically failing students to the Hamden Collaborative Learning Center (HCLC). This program is offered by Hamden Public Schools to provide an alternative education setting to at-risk middle and high school students. Hamden High School also houses the MOM clinic, which provides behavioral, mental and physical support intervention to all students, especially students at-risk. When a school has extensive timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, including identified and at-risk students, it can adequately support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. (school board, teachers, students)

The school extensively provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. The school's website is updated daily with news and student accomplishments. Report cards, along with counselor newsletters are mailed home every quarter. Surveys from the school counseling department are sent both electronically and via paper to students and families to better understand what supports would be most beneficial to students and their families and to assess the effectiveness of current counseling programs. The amount of automatic calls has been reduced per feedback from families that complained about receiving too many unimportant calls, and thereby diluting the importance of school messages, especially during an emergency notification. Many school forms are provided in Spanish and English. Students are provided a Green and Gold Student Handbook at the beginning of the year. In addition to report card comments, parents are able to sign up for teacher conferences in November, February and April of each school year. Per the Endicott survey, 77.7 percent of parents strongly agree or agree the school provides information about available student support services to all students. When a school provides information to families, especially those most in need, about available student support services, families are able to access needed and desired support services to help their students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (student/parent handbooks teachers, students, self-study, Endicott survey)

Support services staff consciously use technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. This is evidenced by the implementation of the Tyler student information system which allows attendance and grades to be stored and accessible to parents, teachers, and other school staff. It also calculates final grades, interim grades, creates schedules for teachers and students, records referrals and disciplinary data. It cannot generate attendance reports for students who are at risk of losing credit in a course and these reports must be completed manually. Students are not currently able to access the system in order to track their own progress; however, parents are able to access this information and review their students' grades, attendance, and schedules. The Tyler system does have potential to be more valuable as a support to increase school to home contact; however, it is not considered to be user friendly and reliable. The limitations of the Tyler system cause delays in the student intervention process.

The pupil personnel staff implements IEP Direct to create and maintain Individualized Education Plans. Naviance is also used by the guidance staff with all students. Ninth graders receive initial training on how to use Naviance and students continue to use the program throughout the following years to take personality assessments, to build resumes, to apply for colleges and to explore careers. Teachers have also been trained with the program and it has been received very well. As a new program, there is a

future plan for Naviance that will increase its value as a school resource support. When a school has a wide range of services that are implemented in a timely manner, students are able to meet the challenge of becoming a 21st century learner. (teachers, school support staff, self-study)

School counseling services by design have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who engaged in a variety of counseling activities to provide personal, academic, career and college readiness counseling for all students. There are ten school counselors to support nearly 2,000 Hamden High School students. The caseload is divided with two counselors supporting 470 freshman students, with a ratio of 235:1. The remaining eight counselors have a student caseload of approx. 180:1, which is significantly lower than the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommended ratio of 250:1. Counselors meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling. The Endicott survey reports that 63.2 percent of parents feel that there is an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel support staff for the school counseling services and 36 percent strongly agree or agree the school counseling personnel meet regularly with their son/daughter to discuss personal, academic, career and college planning.

Developmental lessons are delivered in classroom settings as well as individualized meetings. Written lessons are provided for each counselor presentation. Naviance is introduced to 9th grade students and lessons are conducted throughout high school. The developmental lessons provided by school counselors address the academic, social and college/career readiness needs of all students. Naviance will be introduced to middle school students in the future to fully utilize the tools of this program. School counselors design activities to support student responsibility for post-secondary planning. In addition, school counselors meet with students to finalize schedules. According to the Endicott survey, 60 percent of students report they are comfortable going to their school counselor.

School counselors meet with social workers, school psychologists, teachers, administrators and special education staff to deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community and area mental health agencies and social service providers in regularly scheduled team meetings. In addition, school counselors provide support to the immediate needs and concerns of students. At times, the roles of school counselors, social workers, special education teachers and school psychologist vary by student.

School counselors 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. A survey was sent using email/regular mail to families for feedback about what supports would be helpful to provide. As a result, counselors dedicated more time to post-secondary planning. This year, in addition to presentations during open house, school counselors added a development lesson to seniors in a small group setting to provide information about the college application process. When adequate services are provided by the school counseling department, all students, including students at-risk, are supported in reaching their academic, social, and college/career readiness goals. (self-study, teachers, students, school support staff, Endicott survey, student/parent handbooks)

The school's health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel who provide direct interventions and referrals to students in need of support, as well as offer preventative screening for all students. The school health service providers see approximately 70 students per day for medical reasons. The school nurses make referrals to outside providers, including the in-house medical clinic known as the MOM clinic. The MOM clinic sees approximately 7-12 students per day, by appointment only and is staffed by a secretary, social worker, and two part time APRNs. The MOM clinic is an independently run clinic administered by the Quinnipiac Valley Health District and has daily hours that correspond with school hours. Students are encouraged to join as a member to receive medical support that is beyond what the school health services can provide, and membership continues throughout high school. There are no fees for this service. The majority of staff (68.5 percent) and parents (57.4 percent) of Hamden High School strongly agree or agree the school nurses provide preventative and direct intervention services to all students.

The school health service providers work closely with teachers, social workers, school counselors, and parents. When the school health provider has concerns about student safety, they are

mandated to make referrals to Department of Children and Families. The school nurses adhere to professional standards to maintain student confidentiality. When necessary, school nurses will acquire a signed release to share student concerns with social workers and school counselors, as well as with outside medical professionals.

The school nurses are responsible to screen all 9th grade students for vision and scoliosis. This data will be shared with parents should additional medical attention be required. The school nurses' office can provide a list of pediatricians including insurance information. In addition, the school nurses are responsible for maintaining health records for all students and verifying all 10th grade students have a health physical. All athletes are cleared to play through the nurses' office before tryouts. The time demands to complete all reports puts increased pressure on school health providers.

The school nurses maintain records to track student attendance in the nurses' office and provide this data to building leaders and to the board of education. School nurses are supervised by a team leader who is responsible for all nurses within the district. School nurses are up-to-date with current state-mandated school health requirements. School nurses are responsible for scheduling the annual review meetings for all students who have a 504 Health Plans. School nurses no longer have annual evaluations and are not provided opportunities to collaborate with building leaders and department leaders to develop health curriculum. As a result of the school's many health services that address the physical, mental, and emotional needs of students, they are supported in achieving Hamden High School's 21st Century Learning Expectations.. (school support staff, self-study, students, Endicott survey)

Library/media services are frequently integrated into curriculum and instructional practices. There is an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who engage and implement the school's curriculum by providing a range of materials in a facility that is often available to students and teachers. The library staff uses data to conduct ongoing assessments to improve services and to support students' interests and needs. The school has two full-time librarians who are aware of the school curriculum and who work closely with teachers. Library staff work with freshman teachers to provide instruction on writing a research paper, and they work with other grade levels when students are in the library with teachers working on a project, essay, or research. Library staff pulls books ahead of time for students to use as references, and they guide students through databases to help access the right information. The library staff is not currently involved in the writing of the curriculum, but they have expressed a desire to work more collaboratively with the teachers so that library media services are incorporated in a meaningful and challenging way. The Endicott survey results show that 63 percent of the staff is in agreement that library personnel are actively engaged in the development and implementation of the school's curriculum. Sixty-four percent of the staff states that students use the library on a regular basis to complete research and assignments; however, only 33 percent of students state that they use the library during classes.

The library/media specialists provide a wide range of technological resources in support of the school's curriculum. There are multiple subscription databases that students and staff can access as well as an abundance of DVDs, videos, audio books and e-readers. In addition, students have access to laptops, desktops, scanners, printers, copy machines and i-Pads. However, there is a deficit in the quantity of print materials to support the school curriculum. According to the self-study, Hamden High School has fewer than four print items per student while the Connecticut state average is seventeen print items per student. The large amount of non-print materials exist at the expense of the print materials as it costs more to purchase electronic databases and other programs such as Turnitin; this reduces the amount of funds available to purchase print items. There is an expressed desire to obtain more nonfiction print materials for students and teachers to access. While 69 percent of students and 81.1 percent of teachers feel that the print and non-print materials fully support the curriculum, the LMC staff feels that the low number of print materials does not allow the library to fully support the school's curriculum.

According to the Endicott survey 78.9 percent of students agree that the school library is available to them before, during, and after school. Students can use the library before the start of the school day when it opens at 7:00 a.m. They can also use the library during their study period with a pass. Students are able to access the library during their lunch period time but must sign up for it in the morning. While the school day at Hamden High School ends at 2:00 p.m. and the library is open until 3:00 on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, and open until 2:15 on Thursdays and Fridays. Although librarians stay after closing time to do their own work and allow students to stay late, with the limited formal after school hours students expressed that using the library is sometimes problematic. The library staff expressed that they would like the library to be open later after the school day ends.

The library provides a wide range of materials and the library staff is willing to help students find the information that they are looking for according to 65 percent of students as indicated by the Endicott survey. Independent learning is evidenced by the freshman research project and through the instruction that the library provides to students on how to use the electronic databases, locating information sources, and using the electronic catalogue. This instruction allows students to work independently and to utilize technology skills. There is no evidence to show that the library staff collects or uses student interest information to support student learning.

The library staff does not routinely collect ongoing assessment data or feedback from the school community to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. The library staff does collect data regarding the number of students who use the library throughout the day and when they do file an annual report. Informally, they use whatever information they can through conversations with students, teachers, and library attendance numbers to support student learning. The self-study indicates that there have been no changes made to library services in response to school-wide rubric assessment data. The study does indicate that this is due to the newness of the school-wide rubric, and a plan is in place for the library to use the collected data when it becomes available to make changes to library services. The availability of technology, electronic databases, non-print materials, print materials, access to the library, and library staff instruction allow students to engage in 21st century learning skills. When library/media services are fully integrated into curriculum and instructional practices, students are better able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, students, Endicott survey)

Support services for identified students consistently have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who often collaborate with all teachers and other staff, provide inclusive learning opportunities, and inconsistently perform ongoing assessment to improve services and usually ensure students achieve 21st century learning expectations. Hamden High School has eleven special education teachers, two speech/language pathologists, four school psychologists, five social workers, and one transition coordinator. There are also fifteen special education paraprofessionals who work within the special education department and three paraprofessionals who work in the computer labs and library. Hamden High School has one full-time ESOL teacher and one full-time ESOL tutor who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff in order to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. There is also a coordinator of special education services, a PPT coordinator, and a part-time clerk who is in charge of scheduling PPT meetings. According to the Endicott survey, 65.7 percent of staff feels that there was an adequate number of support staff.

Psychologists and social workers at the school service all students, including identified students. The psychologists are involved in the planning of PPTs and parental contact in regards to those meetings. School psychologists are also the case managers for the students in their respective houses. The school psychologists state in the self-study that they spend 60 percent of their time scheduling meetings, drafting new Individualized Education Plans, facilitating and taking notes at meetings, and following up with colleagues. The remainder of their time is spent on behavioral interventions and limited individual and group counseling. Social workers are in charge of truancy and attendance monitoring as well as scheduling 504 meetings. They also provide student counseling, crisis

intervention, suicide assessments, and DCF reporting as well as conducting initial and triennial evaluations for special education students. Social workers meet with approximately 160 regular education students, 40 students with 504 plans, and 120 special education students on an average month, which is roughly 18 percent of the population. School support personnel indicate is an adequate number of support staff but feel that they are not being utilized in the most effective manner. There are inconsistencies in student support personnel roles as case managers and staff members feel services are not always delivered effectively due to the amount of time spent on scheduling, paperwork, attendance tracking, and truancy issues rather than time spent with students.

At Hamden High School support staff collaborates to some degree to achieve the school's 21st learning expectations. There is consistent collaboration between regular education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff in the 9th grade team meetings. However, in grades 10-12, no formal collaboration or planning time exists between regular education and special education teachers. There is some collaboration that occurs at PPT meetings and grades 10-12 house meetings, but inconsistencies exist and there is a strong desire for a formal and structured collaboration time to be developed. There is also no formal SRBI process in place at the school, so data is used in a very limited manner. Informal interventions exist in the school, but no formal data is utilized to support the achievement of the school's 21st learning expectations. Support staff has also indicated that building level communication is not always effective or timely and can create issues with schedules and meeting times.

The support staff at the high school provides adequate inclusive learning opportunities for the vast majority of identified students. Identified students are placed in a program based on their individual needs. There is a self-contained program, a self-contained English and math class program, and there is a support class program that includes co-taught classes; inclusion occurs in all 22 classes that are co-taught with a special education and regular education teachers. In all three programs students are enrolled in regular education classes during the day. The primarily self-contained students are enrolled in at least two electives with regular education students. Special education teachers assist regular education teachers to make modifications to teaching and assessments to meet the needs of the student. One-on-one paraprofessionals are also provided to support students with special needs in all learning environments. In the 9th grade house, two teams are supported by a special education teacher who co-teaches in the core content areas and teaches a support class for students with IEPs. These two teams are also supported by the literacy staff which includes the reading consultant and the reading tutors. According to the self-study, the Hamden Transition Academy also provides services to special education students. English language learners are supported by the ESOL teacher and the ESOL tutor. Depending on the level of English proficiency of the students, they are placed in self-contained language arts and ESOL classes and integrate into the regular education classes as they become proficient in English. The staff has expressed a need for professional development in the area of differentiation and common planning time to make the co-taught classrooms more effective. Special education paraprofessionals have indicated that they have received little to no training.

The support staff for students with special needs utilizes IEP Direct to maintain data regarding the compliance of testing and accommodations. IEP Direct is an electronic database which enables staff to meet the mandate by the CT State Department of Education that requires the electronic submission of IEPs to be reviewed for compliance with federal special education laws. HHS is currently in compliance with federal special education law. The Endicott survey reveals that 56 percent of staff strongly agrees or agrees that the support service personnel use assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and to achieve the school's learning expectations. The coordinator of secondary special education is responsible for reviewing educational assessments as well as for providing guidance in the selection and inventory of tests, assessment materials, teaching aids and supports as posted in the job description for this support position. When individualized services are provided by the school for special education students, 504 students, and ELL students, opportunities are

created for identified students to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, teachers, classroom observations, student/parent handbooks, school support staff)

Commendations:

1. The use of the school's website to provide updated information and highlight student achievement
2. The bilingual forms provided to non-English speaking students and their families
3. The many opportunities to for parents to schedule teacher conferences
4. The direct medical intervention services provided by the MOM clinic
5. The access to school counselors, social workers, school psychologist in smaller house structures
6. The willingness of the library media center staff to be involved in the curriculum writing process
7. The Hamden Transition Academy for identified students above the age of 18 to have a college experience

Recommendations:

1. Investigate methods for increasing communication and intervention at the 10th, 11th and 12th grade levels
2. Create a systematic evaluation of the services provided by school counselors, social workers and school psychologists
3. Develop a systematic plan to improve the communication between school counselors, social workers, school psychologist and special education teachers to enhance student support
4. Include school nurses in decisions regarding health curriculum and school policies
5. Clarify who is responsible for scheduling meetings and maintaining records for students with 504 plans
6. Create collaboration between library media staff and classroom teachers to ensure that services are integrated into curriculum in a rigorous manner
7. Explore opportunities to extend the after school hours of the library



Community Resources for Learning

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

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

Conclusions

The community and district's governing body have provided generally consistent funding for a wide range of school programs and services. The funding process is open, predictable and accessible to various stakeholders. In the face of various economic pressures, the board of education is credited with advocating for and supporting the maintenance of essential funding of instructional and support services, general operating expenses, professional development, technology and equipment. Ongoing confidence in funding of existing budget projections is an area of concern due to chronic financial exigencies of the town of Hamden. These exigencies are implicated in the essentially flat funding of the town's education budget for the past three years. Overall funding has not increased appreciably despite annual increased fixed costs (salaries, transportation, benefits). This yields fewer available resources for other school needs.

Hamden High provides a wide range of programs and services as well as curricular and extracurricular choices. School administrators voice a commitment to program maintenance. Budget changes affected through staff attrition and retirement are not intended to impact programs per se. Staff has voiced concerns that these changes could affect some course concentrations such as the valued CNA program. There is consensus that ongoing professional development and curriculum revision are fiscally supported and these line items have been stable over time.

The district has an ongoing process of improving technology resources as evidenced by yearly technology-earmarked budget items. There are new computer labs equipped with up-to-date computers, projectors and SMARTBoards. Teachers report that they have sufficient instructional materials and supplies, although these are limited in some areas. For example, some social studies teachers improvise by creating their own written class material and refrain from issuing textbooks because there are not enough for each student.

Administration has been creatively supporting new initiatives through grants to support capital projects, (e.g., athletic facilities), curricular programs (e.g., Project Lead the Way), school safety equipment purchases and some investment in technology resources. A recent \$231,500 allocation was spent to address some cosmetic and building climate items that staff had identified through the self-study including painting, carpet replacement, ceiling tile replacement, water fountain replacements, and restroom improvement.

How prepared the district would be to continue off-budget programs once grants are consumed is unknown. In addition, there is some concern that forward-looking budget considerations and enrollment projections call for staff reductions which may have implications for class sizes and perhaps some valued course offerings. Although there is no evidence that these considerations would jeopardize core functions of the school, high school staff members report that they are unable to project their ability to continue recent initiatives such as the RAISES program which is intended to encourage higher achievement aspirations across a range of student groups. This may reflect a lack of knowledge about resources available or a lack of understanding about the budget.

Many staff interviews reported the recent building cleaning, painting, and other cosmetic changes were appreciated, but these occurred in anticipation of the NEASC visit and the staff reported concern that they may not be supported on an ongoing basis. When appropriate funding is made available, the operation of Hamden High School will proceed in more effective ways across a variety of dimensions which impact achievement of core values and student learning expectations. (School Leadership Committee, teachers, self-study, central office administrators)

Hamden High School minimally develops, plans and funds programs to ensure the maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, to properly maintain, catalogue and replace equipment and to keep the school clean on a daily basis. Hamden High School has consistent funding for a wide variety of educational programs, staffing, professional development, and student support. However, the school appears to have major issues developing, planning, and funding programs to ensure maintenance and repair of the building and plant and cleaning the building on a daily basis with available custodial staff.

The Endicott survey stated that 76 percent of staff and 60 percent of students report that the school is not clean or well maintained. Eighty-three percent of staff believes that needed repairs are not completed in a timely manner. Students indicate that the school is now clean in anticipation of the accreditation visit but this is not the norm. Discussion with teachers indicates that cleaning is limited to sweeping of the floors and emptying of wastebaskets. Floors do not get mopped on a regular basis. Students indicate that some classroom items such as ceiling tiles take an extraordinary amount of time to be replaced. This was echoed by teachers who stated that requests for maintenance frequently go unanswered. For example, one teacher reported that her classroom had a clock that was broken for months despite several repair requests. Another teacher stated that some classrooms have no telephone, which can be a significant safety and emergency issue. Students and teachers stated that the condition of the restrooms needs improvement; privacy doors are missing and graffiti exists. A report from Quinipiack Valley Health District findings dated January 23, 2013, revealed continued and unaddressed issues related to heating, cooling, and air exchange; other issues include badly scratched/ damaged lockers (top of C-Wing stairwell), dirty drinking fountains, dirty air handling grills, dirty or missing filters, missing fire extinguishers, and absence of “green” cleaning products. A follow up QVHD report (March 2015) was much more positive, but still listed several items that need attention.

As a result of the NEASC self-study, \$231, 500 was spent to paint the ceilings of various hallways, MOM building classrooms, restrooms, and the cafeteria; replace 12 drinking fountains, replace the Simplex central system and some classroom clocks in preparation for the accreditation visit. Recent inspection of fire extinguisher tags, fire alarms and sprinklers, revealed that proper tagging and monthly inspections are being done through outside fire protection firms. Exit door lighting is also checked on a regular basis as is video surveillance equipment.

Building repair/maintenance logs/schedules that show status of open and completed maintenance requests are not available. The facilities director stated that when staff needs maintenance, an email is sent to the head custodian. The head custodian then determines the scope/priority of the work and enters the necessary work order(s). However, according to kitchen staff, their maintenance work orders are submitted through www.myschoolbuilding.com, a comprehensive maintenance work order system. Open and completed maintenance requests can be viewed by the initiator of the request. In most cases, kitchen work order requests are completed promptly. However, kitchen staff members report that close-out of completed work orders is not done consistently. When Hamden High School has an effective mechanism to address the maintenance and repair of the school building; to maintain, catalogue and replace equipment; and to keep the school clean on a daily basis, students will be better able to achieve the school’s 21st century learning expectations. (students, self-study, teachers, central office administrators, School Leadership Committee, facility tour, classroom observations, Endicott survey)

The community consciously funds and the school to a large extent implements a long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs, technology, and capital improvements. In recent years, there have been budget freezes annually midyear. The district publishes an annual budget guide which annotates line items. There are district-wide technology and capital improvement plans. The district technology plans include provisions for increased computer availability, laptops, document cameras and LCD projectors. The district capital improvement plan includes amelioration of heating and air conditioning deficiencies, whiteboards, locker replacement and student seating. The most important of the capital improvements according to high school staff is the temperature and air quality problem resolution. There is also a plan to upgrade security camera systems. There is a plan to upgrade outdoor athletic facilities through replacement of the turf football field and the installation of a surface improvement for the baseball/softball field. Student enrollment is declining slightly at Hamden High School and is projected to continue to decline through 2018. The administration is addressing this decline by reducing staff. To avoid layoffs and the elimination of programs, the administration has not filled some positions left vacant due to teacher retirements. The district’s capital improvement plan covers the years 2014-2020 with a total cost estimated to be \$2,222,250. The plan includes an update to the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, the

installation of white boards in some classrooms, the replacement of lockers, and the purchase of student desks. According to the plan, the town has made a commitment to the improvement of the physical plant citing teacher concerns. Within the high school itself, long range plans to foster growth of existing programs and service improvements have been identified. These include plans to improve achievement in reading, writing, mathematics and science, especially in previously underperforming subgroups, as evidenced by state-wide testing, common formative assessments and summative assessments; the development of common formative assessments for all grades; maintain a comprehensive support system for struggling students in all grades; decrease in out-of-school suspensions; and increase parent involvement/support. When budgeting is coordinated with building administration planning, students will have the tools necessary to attain the school's 21st century learning expectations. (school board, School Leadership Committee, self-study, teachers, central office administrators)

Hamden High School faculty and district administrators are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget: however, building administrators have little oversight of the budget. The budgetary process begins in late winter/early spring. Directors and/or department chairs use department time to discuss the financial needs of the department. Teachers submit curriculum-related budget requests to their representative department chair or director. Teachers may meet with their department chair or director to prioritize their requests. Once department chairs and/or directors have the requests, they are asked to complete forms to request funds for the upcoming school year. They are required to justify their needs, especially if they are asking for an increase from the previous year. They also prioritize their requests so that if they are not fulfilled for the upcoming school year, they can roll over the request for the following year. Each department chair and/or director must meet with the finance director and superintendent to formally review their budget requests. The budget is prepared by the superintendent and board of education and approved by the mayor of the town of Hamden. Once the budget is finalized, each department chair and/or director is responsible for allocating monies for instructional supplies, curriculum development and professional development. Department chairs and/or directors can request information on the status of budget allocations throughout the school year from the finance office. While the budgetary process includes teachers, department chairs and directors, high school administration is not included in the development of the budget. Instead, the budget is developed through the superintendent, board of education, and the mayor. However, the building principal and high school administrators are required to operate within budgetary constraints and to reduce expenses when necessary.

Under Connecticut state law, the board of education receives a lump sum allocation from the Legislative Council as a single line item in the operating budget, but then has the opportunity to determine how those funds will be spent. It does so through a series of public deliberations by the board of education. In Hamden, total board of education funding, including medical and CMERS retirement expenses amount to \$95,806,625 of the town's total budget of \$211,262,297. This represents 45.35 percent of the town's overall budget.

Large purchases, construction projects, and other special expenditures (like the refurbishment of the existing HVAC system), are not part of the operating budget. Instead, such expenditures are bonded for up to 30 years as part of Hamden's Capital Improvement Plan. When both faculty and building administration are involved with planning the budget, sustained satisfactory levels of cleanliness and building/facilities/equipment operation will occur; this is critical to maintain and improve the student/teacher morale and achievement of student learning expectations. (School Leadership Committee, budget documents, self-study, teachers, central office administrators)

Hamden High School's physical plant adequately supports the delivery of quality school programs and services. Science classrooms and laboratories are sufficient for current course offerings. The library and media center is an open, airy and inviting space for student research and is appropriately equipped. There is some concern; however, that the use of the library's mezzanine to house the student career center results in a great deal of noise that can be heard in the main library. There are no reported or observed problems in the dining/food services area which has benefitted from recent ceiling

renovation and painting. The guidance area has a sufficient number of offices, but soundproofing is an issue. This limits a sense of confidentiality. The number of classrooms is sufficient for the number of classes scheduled although some classes in some departments are not sufficiently spacious. Teachers in some instances share classrooms for their workspaces. There is only one dedicated space for 504 and PPT meetings resulting in frequent overbooking.

The school contains a very attractive courtyard that is accessible and appears utilized for a range of activities including raised garden beds, a green house, and cooking grills for culinary classes. Other outdoor spaces are adequate and suitable. Parking lot lighting was recently upgraded.

Hamden High school was built in 1935 with major renovations and additions in the mid-1990s. The original building was air conditioned during the renovation period. The additions had air conditioning added over a period of years since the mid-1990s. Classroom temperatures and stagnant air have chronically interfered with the instructional environment despite many attempts at symptomatic repair. Overly cold or overly hot areas have produced student and staff discomfort, distraction, and morale concerns regarding physical learning and working conditions. Teacher sometimes supply personal space heaters and fans. Students may leave classes during cold weather to get their coats from their lockers. When heating, cooling and environmental systems are adequate, they do not cancel out the benefits of adequate space and other physical amenities in terms of yielding spaces where optimal attention, alertness and response to instruction can occur. (teachers, self-study, students, facility tour, classroom observations)

Hamden High School and/or its vendors appropriately maintain 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. However, the school does not currently keep machine catalogs that track preventive maintenance and repairs. An inspection of records reveals that fire alarms are maintained by an outside firm (SimplexGrinnell); fire extinguishers are checked and maintained by outside firm (Life Safety & Service); video cameras are checked by maintenance personnel; a catalog listing, preventive maintenance, and repair log of maintenance equipment was not available as of this report. Door exit signs and emergency lighting are checked by an outside firm.

In 1996, HHS completed new construction and a code renovation project which brought the entire building up to compliance with ADA requirements. Doorways were widened, walkways and sidewalks were "curb-cut," areas of refuge were created, and restrooms were renovated. MSDS records are maintained for all chemicals used at the school. Copies are available in the main office, nurse's office, and maintenance office. As part of a grant, Hamden High School recently installed improved security glass on the exterior entrances of the building. Additionally, HHS installed a video surveillance system in all common areas of the school. This system will be enhanced with higher resolution cameras in the near future. When the school's egress, maintenance, fire, and life safety equipment are properly maintained, the equipment will work properly when it is most needed, thus ensuring student and staff safety. (self-study, facility tour, central office administrators)

Professional staff actively engages parents and families in students' school experience and, especially in the freshman teams, frequently reaches out to those families whose students would most benefit from a positive home-school connection. Many staff members and administrators recognize that while the enrollment is declining, the changing demographics of the student body is leading to increases in overall psycho-social needs of the population, and that this has significant implications for students' readiness to learn when they arrive in school. Comparable percentages of staff and parents (60 percent) agree that Hamden High staff members take steps to engage parents and families. Established efforts include an annual open house and quarterly parent-teacher conferences. Website notices, automatic phone messaging, and mailings notify parents of their opportunity to schedule conferences with teachers. Conferences are scheduled to be as mutually convenient to parents and teachers as possible. Freshman teams identify and target students who would especially benefit from parent meetings. Freshmen are offered school tours, team meetings, and information sessions with each department

during the summer preceding their matriculation. Parents are invited to attend annual review PPTs and 504 meetings if they have a qualifying student.

Student interviews indicate that they feel that teacher outreach to their parents is one demonstration of how teachers care about them as learners. The high school handbook and website contain information regarding how parents may contact their students' teachers. Hamden High has instituted online and email systems to facilitate sharing of school and student information. Parents can access student progress reports via the parent portal. Parents can enroll in an email alert which notifies them when their student's data has been updated. Continuous strengthening of home-school connections conveys caring, creates structure and more secure student mindsets resulting in more successful and productive learners. (Endicott survey, self-study, teachers, students, parents)

Hamden High School has developed extensive parents, community, business and higher education partnerships that support student learning. Hamden High School has an email, website, and electronic student grade portal that provide communication between staff and parents/families. The school's website provides important information such as HHS core values and beliefs, announcements, staff contact information, and important links for board of education and teaching/learning. Many teachers post homework, lessons, and instructional materials on various websites.

Guidance holds a series of workshops regarding financial aid, scholarships, alternative education, the workforce, Naviance and life after high school. The HHS health office communicates with parents regarding physicals, immunizations, and vision/hearing screening. They also collect student data regarding students' allergies, medical conditions, and special needs. The special education department involves parents of students with special needs in a number of student transition services including a "Transition Expo" which showcases several school/community services. The English as a second language (ESOL) coordinator holds an open house for EL students and their parents at the beginning of the year and provides a number of translation services as required during the students' tenure at HHS.

There are a number of performances and presentations that showcase student work throughout the school year including awards ceremonies, athletic events, art shows, concerts, musicals, and field trips. HHS encourages family involvement by inviting parents/families to attend/participate. HHS participates with a variety of community and government agencies including the Workforce Alliance, Department of Developmental Services, the Social Security Administration, and Small Business Administration.

HHS has worked collaboratively with local businesses to provide speakers, mentors and job shadowing with local banks and credit unions. The school has established a Financial Reality Fair and conducts workshops on finance. The student club, DECA, has been assisted by local businesses to prepare them for state and national competitions. The Hamden Regional Chapter of Commerce helps HHS secure a variety of businesses to assist with high school events. The Hamden Public Library works with the school library to promote and support the HHS summer reading program. Local organizations, business, and community groups offer many scholarships to senior students.

HHS has implemented a College to Career Pathways Program through Gateway Community College and a Young Entrepreneur's Seminar. An outreach program to introduce students to careers in education, business and health care has been provided through Quinnipiac University. Independent study opportunities are provided through Yale University, Quinnipiac University, and Southern Connecticut State University. Business career conferences are held through the University of New Haven. Math students can participate in the Yale Young Scholars Program for an introduction to biostatistics. When the school is involved with parents/family and the community, students can perform at high levels and increase their learning and high school experience. When schools develop partnerships with parents, business and higher education, students see the relevance of education and are supported in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (teachers, students, school board, self-study, student/parent handbooks)

Commendations:

1. The provision of an acceptable level of student educational supports given current budget constraints
2. The development of a wide variety of partnerships with local and governmental agencies, industry and business organizations, and area colleges/universities

Recommendations:

1. Strengthen alliances among various stakeholders in pursuing and advocating appropriate funding for overall operations and meeting stated educational objectives
2. Address serious deficiencies with the heating, cooling, and ventilation system
3. Ensure regular checks of all fire and lifesaving equipment within the building
4. Implement a single maintenance work order system which gives all staff members the ability to enter and observe the status of their requests
5. Address all maintenance work requests in a timely manner
6. Ensure restroom facilities are cleaned on a daily basis and repair or replace missing equipment so that the facilities are functional and provide privacy for students
7. Ensure that the school building is well cleaned on a daily basis
8. Create a unified, school-wide teacher web page system that is easily accessed by students and parents

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 Hamden High School. The faculty, school board, and superintendent should be apprised by the building administration yearly of progress made addressing visiting committee recommendations.

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

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

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

The Committee urges school officials to establish a formal follow-up program at once to review and implement all findings of the self-study and valid recommendations identified in the evaluation report. An outline of the Follow-Up Program is available in the Committee's *Accreditation Handbook* 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 Committee staff following the on-site visit.

On behalf of the entire visiting team I would like to thank the principal, high school administrative team, central office administrative team, steering committee chairs and the entire faculty and staff of Hamden High School for their hard work and hospitality. I would also like to extend our gratitude towards the students of Hamden High School. They are polite, poised, and genuinely kind young men and women.

**Hamden High School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
April 26-29, 2015**

Visiting Committee

<p>Anne-Marie Flaherty East Greenwich High School East Greenwich, RI 02818</p> <p>Jan Perruccio Old Saybrook Public Schools Old Saybrook, CT 06475</p> <p>Jennifer Mauro Wilby High School Waterbury, CT 06704</p> <p>Andrea Russo New Britain High School New Britain, CT 06051</p> <p>Eileen Szymkowicz Pilgrim High School Warwick, RI 02888</p> <p>Jim Carlson Guilford High School Guilford, CT 06437</p> <p>Lindsay Tringali Rockville High School Vernon Rockville, CT 06066</p> <p>Deborah Coretto Naugatuck High School Naugatuck, CT 06770</p>	<p>Jennifer Wentworth Amity Regional Senior High School Woodbridge, CT 06525</p> <p>Tina Borges New Bedford High School New Bedford, MA 02740</p> <p>Sharon Cournoyer Windsor Locks School District Windsor Locks, CT 06096</p> <p>Paul Jones Watertown High School Watertown, CT 06795</p> <p>Tracey Acquarulo West Haven High School West Haven, CT 06516</p> <p>Kimberly Hudock Farmington High School Farmington, CT 06032</p> <p>David Salonia Simsbury High School Simsbury, CT 06070</p> <p>Peter Hunt Waterford High School Waterford, CT 06835</p>
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NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Committee on Public Secondary Schools

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE POLICY

Principals of member schools must report to the Committee 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 Committee'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

Hamden High School

Commendations

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

- The inclusive process used to create the school's core values and beliefs
- The use of the school's Connection program to introduce the core values to the student body
- The integration of the writing rubric into all departments and the collection of baseline data for grades 9, 10 and 11
- The evidence of the school's core values and beliefs in the daily culture of the school

Curriculum

- The efforts of teachers to include 21st century learning expectations in the taught curriculum
- The use of school wide rubrics to ensure students practice and achieve the 21st century learning expectations
- The use of the UbD format in the design of enriched real world problem-solving activities that relate to what students are experiencing outside the classroom
- The availability of programs such as Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course, and the ServSafe food certification program to provide students with out of classroom opportunities.
- The access to adequate resources in the media center to support curriculum
- The enthusiasm, willingness, and dedication of teachers and other stakeholders to design and implement an effective written curriculum in the classroom.
- The school-wide effort to improve writing as measured by the school-wide writing rubric

Instruction

- The purposeful planned instruction to include higher order thinking skills in some of the classes, especially in elective courses
- The many co-curricular opportunities that foster inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking skills.
- The creation and implementation of self-created videos to flip classrooms and support the students' understanding of concepts in some areas

Assessment of and for Student Learning

- Parent access to student performance through the use of Tyler SIS
- Corresponding rubrics, teacher generated and school-wide are provided to students prior to formative and summative assessments
- Feedback is provided to students to ensure understanding of expectations, assessment, and revision possibilities for their work in the present and future

- The learning labs which are staffed by teachers and designed to support students who need additional help or desire more focused feedback
- The practice of giving common assessments in like courses

School Culture and Leadership

- The freshman academy's examination of student learning and instructional practice
- The efforts of the school and district leadership to ensure a safe school environment through a camera surveillance system and increased security staff
- The numerous opportunities provided to students both in the course offerings and in extra-curricular activities
- The involvement of all school personnel in creating a school culture and an environment that promotes 21st century learning expectations
- The implementation of interdisciplinary PLC time each month to increase collaboration and professional dialogue around the school wide writing rubric
- The flexibility of the schedule, students, and staff for providing additional learning opportunities within the school day
- The extended learning opportunities through curricular programs and clubs that support student learning pathways and future career goals
- The involvement of students in the decision-making processes both in informal and formal means allowing them to feel ownership in the school
The decision-making authority provided to the principal by the board of education and the superintendent to act as the instructional leader for HHS

School Resources for Learning

- The use of the school's website to provide updated information and highlight student achievement
- The bilingual forms provided to non-English speaking students and their families
- The many opportunities to for parents to schedule teacher conferences
- The direct medical intervention services provided by the MOM clinic
- The access to school counselors, social workers, school psychologist in smaller house structures
- The Hamden Transition Academy for identified students above the age of 18 to have a college experience
- The willingness of the library media center staff to be involved in the curriculum writing process
- The Hamden Transition Academy for identified students above the age of 18 to have a college experience

Community Resources for Learning

- The provision of an acceptable level of student educational supports given current budget constraints
- The development of a wide variety of partnerships with local and governmental agencies, industry and business organizations, and area colleges/universities

Recommendations

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

- Create an anchor set for rubrics to set a target level for student achievement
- Increase awareness of the core values and beliefs through Connection time, parent/teacher meetings, cultural gatherings and student assemblies
- Encourage the consistent use of rubrics in all departments.
- Offer professional development in research-based effective writing strategies.
- Use the school-wide rubrics to provide meaningful feedback to students and encourage revision and reflection,

Curriculum

- Identify in the curriculum specific instructional strategies to deliver content to students in the classroom.
- Revise the curriculum documents to include the application of skills and knowledge as observed in the classrooms
- Develop a leadership structure at the department level that promotes alignment between written and taught curriculum
- Complete the revision of the curriculum in a common format that includes units of study, 21st century learning expectations, instructional strategies, and assessment practices
- Provide 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
- Refurbish culinary arts classrooms to ensure appropriate delivery of the curriculum and a safe learning environment
- Ensure science lab facilities support a 21st century teaching environment
- Ensure equitable access to textbooks and supplies for all classes

Instruction

- Provide more opportunities for peers to collaborate within disciplines, across disciplines and between grade levels and schools within the district
- Maintain science labs, foods classrooms, and other areas to positively impact teaching and learning as well as ensure safety to all
- Ensure that there is a formal process in place for evaluating instructional practices that align with core values, beliefs, and learning expectations.
- Investigate other cross-curricular opportunities for core courses and electives
- Explore ways to help teachers consistently use strategies to transition their classroom from teacher-directed to student-directed instruction
- Continue to create authentic assignments in all content areas
- Increase the opportunities for students to reflect on the learning process
- Provide opportunities for teachers to observe their colleagues integrating technology that enables students to drive their own learning.
- Use data analysis to implement appropriate instructional strategies

Assessment of and for Student Learning

- Offer professional development to justify the connection between the rubric assessment and the grade assigned to the student.
- Provide more professional development opportunities for teachers to consistently use and interpret school-wide rubrics
- Extend use of PLCs to allow more time for teacher collaboration to encourage similar interventions and discussions as are present in the ninth grade teams
- More consistently collect and analyze student performance data after the ninth grade to help inform instruction, curriculum, and assessment
- Provide more opportunities for students to revise or use feedback to improve their work
- Work to better align grading and reporting practices according to school's core values, beliefs, and expectations

School Culture and Leadership

- Maintain consistency and open communication in dealing with student behaviors and teacher communications
- Create more heterogeneously grouped core courses that foster heterogeneity, inclusiveness, and equity
- Evaluate the process by which students select course levels and are recommended for courses to ensure equal access to rigorous expectations for all students
- Ensure that all stakeholders, including parents and students understand and are active in the process of choosing courses and making leveling decisions
- Encourage students to be a part of the development and planning of the advisory program to ensure their motivation and engagement
- Create opportunity for teachers at the high school to have a voice that can inform the principal and professional development committee about the learning needs of staff to improve student-learning outcomes

School Resources for Learning

- Investigate methods for increasing communication and intervention at the 10th, 11th and 12th grade levels
- Create a systematic evaluation of the services provided by school counselors, social workers and school psychologists
- Develop a systematic plan to improve the communication between school counselors, social workers, school psychologist and special education teachers to enhance student support
- Include school nurses in decisions regarding health curriculum and school policies
- Clarify who is responsible for scheduling meetings and maintaining records for students with 504 plans
- Create collaboration between library media staff and classroom teachers to ensure that services are integrated into curriculum in a rigorous manner
- Explore opportunities to extend the after school hours of the library

Community Resources for Learning

- Strengthen alliances among various stakeholders in pursuing and advocating appropriate funding for overall operations and meeting stated educational objectives
- Address serious deficiencies with the heating, cooling, and ventilation system
- Implement a single maintenance work order system which gives all staff members the ability to enter and observe the status of their requests
- Address all maintenance work requests in a timely manner
- Create a unified, school-wide teacher web page system that is easily accessed by students and parents
- Ensure regular checks of all fire and lifesaving equipment within the building
- Ensure that the school building is well cleaned on a daily basis
- Create a unified, school-wide teacher web page system that is easily accessed by students and parents