

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS



REPORT OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Staples High School

Westport, CT

October 25 - 28, 2015

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

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Introduction

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

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

As the responsible agency for matters of the evaluation and accreditation of public secondary school member institutions, CPSS requires visiting 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 shows 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 Staples High School, a committee of ten members, including the principal, supervised all aspects of the self-study. The steering committee assigned all teachers and administrators in the school to appropriate self-study subcommittees to determine the quality of all programs, activities and facilities available for young people.

The self-study of Staples High School extended over a period of 24 school months from May 2013 to October 2015.

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, Staples 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 Staples High School. The Committee members spent four days in Westport, 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, and secondary school administrators and teachers, diverse points of view were brought to bear on the evaluation of Staples High School.

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

- review of the school's self-study materials
- 30 hours shadowing 15 students for a half day
- a total of 48 hours of classroom observation (in addition to time shadowing students)
- numerous informal observations in and around the school
- tours of the facility
- individual meetings with 30 teachers about their work, instructional approaches, and the assessment of student learning
- group meetings with students, parents, school and district administrators, and teachers
- the examination of student work including a selection of work collected by the school

Each conclusion 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 Staples High School.

School and Community Summary

The town of Westport, Connecticut is a suburban community located in southern Fairfield County along the Interstate 95 corridor, less than 50 miles from New York City. The Westport community is defined by its evolution from small New England village to an affluent suburban town, and takes a great amount of civic pride in the role it has played in the history of Connecticut and the United States. This evolution is evident through town with the architecture of modern buildings built alongside traditional New England homes and churches. U.S. Route 1, or the Post Road, is the primary economic corridor in Westport, lined with local businesses and national chains along its entire length through town from Norwalk to Fairfield. Westport also has smaller retail centers in town on Main Street, in the Saugatuck area near the Metro-North train station, and in Southport, which straddle the Westport/Fairfield border. Retail trade, finance, insurance, health care, and social assistance are the dominant industries in Westport, accounting for 45.1 percent of total employment in town. Major employers in Westport include Resonating Wellness LLC, Bridgewater Associates LP, First Equity Group, Community Development Foundation, and Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health.

The current population of 26,516 in Westport is a well-educated, with over 74 percent of its residents age 25 or older holding a bachelor's degree or higher. Westport is an affluent community, with a median family income of \$152,894. Although racially Westport is a predominantly white community, census data from 2010 demonstrates that racial/ethnic diversity is increasing in town. Between 2000 and 2010, Westport saw increases in its Asian population (+67.6 percent), Hispanic/Latino population (+54.7 percent), and Black/African American population (+ 4.5 percent), while seeing an overall decline in its white population of -0.3 percent. In addition, approximately 11.4 percent of Westport's residents were born outside of the United States, adding to the diversity of the community.

The Westport Public School system is comprised of five K-5 elementary schools and the Stepping Stones Pre-School with a total enrollment of 2,520 students. There are two middle schools: Bedford Middle School, located adjacent to Staples High School, houses 855 students and Coleytown

Middle School, located two miles north of the high school campus, has an enrollment of 547 students. Westport is also home to Greens Farms Academy, a K-12 independent day school with approximately 700 students enrolled.

The Westport community places an extraordinarily high value on supporting its schools, which is reflected on the community resources allocated to the schools. Westport's per pupil expenditure in 2013-14 was \$17,885, compared with approximately \$15,200 in the state of Connecticut. In 2015, the town of Westport adopted a budget of \$121,653,502 for the schools, representing 61.4 percent of the total town budget. With educational cost sharing factored in, 60.24 percent of local taxation is spent on the schools. Staples High School is the sole public high school serving Westport, Connecticut. The school is home to 1,850 students enrolled in grades 9-12. Since opening new and renovated facilities in 2005, the high school has grown in enrollment from 1,522 to a peak in 2012 of 1,879. Enrollment projections show an anticipated rise to 1,912 in 2017-18, after which the population will remain stable. Staples High School was recognized as a 2013 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education, as the #3 High School in Connecticut according to the 2015 Niche rankings, #9 in the state in the 2014 U.S. News and World Report rankings, and was named as the #1 high school in Connecticut by Connecticut Magazine in November 2008. While these rankings are primarily based on standardized measures, the positive and inclusive culture of the school provides the foundation for first-rate academic, arts, and athletic programs.

Staples High School prides itself on being attentive to the needs of all students. The dropout rate has averaged 0.2 percent for the past several years. Much of the reason for this is attributable to the fact that students and teachers are invested in the school's activities and present on a daily basis. On a daily basis, 98.1 percent of students and 94.6 percent of teachers are in attendance. The climate of the school is also bolstered by the stability of the school population.

Demographically, Staples High School is racially, culturally, and ethnically similar to the town at large. The school's population is 88.1 percent White, 5.3 percent Asian, 4.2 percent Hispanic/Latino, 1.9

percent Black or African American, 0.4 percent two or more races, and 0.1 percent American Indian. The student population also includes 60 students eligible for free lunch, and 18 students eligible for reduced-price meals, which is approximately 4 percent of the student body.

In order to foster diversity and cultural understanding among its students, the high school has welcomed students from the “A Better Chance” program, which brings academically able but less affluent students from elsewhere in the country to live in Westport and attend Staples. In addition, the district’s longstanding commitment toward economic and racial diversity is embodied in the 47 students from Bridgeport who attended the Westport Public Schools through the Open Choice program. Eleven of those students attend Staples, continuing to make Westport’s one of the largest such programs in this area of the state. In addition to providing activities that generate student interest in topics such as debate, politics, conservation, athletics, and the arts, co-curricular programs at Staples also foster student understanding and break down cultural barriers. Staples has a widely recognized Best Buddies program, Unified Sports, Gay-Straight Alliance, and a variety of cultural clubs for students to join.

The positive climate at Staples supports an outstanding academic program. For the 446 members of the class of 2014, the graduation rate was 98.4 percent. In 2014, 92.6 percent of students went on to four-year colleges, 4.3 percent went to two-year colleges, 1.5 percent pursued vocational or other post-graduate work, 0.2 percent entered the military, and 0.7 percent entered directly into the work force. The class of 2014 included 9 National Merit Scholar Finalists, 9 Semi-Finalists, and 27 Commended students. In 2014, 57 percent of Staples graduates were admitted to highly selective colleges.

The school has extraordinarily strong Advanced Placement (AP) enrollment and performance. In 2014, 533 Staples students took 1,133 AP exams, and 92 percent of those exams were scored at a “3” or higher. All Staples students have access to AP courses either through teacher recommendation or parental override, as long as they have met the prerequisite course requirement.

The arts and other creative programs are as highly valued and regarded at Staples as the academic program. Staples Players is a nationally recognized theater program and received the

prestigious Moss Hart Award in 2006, which includes entries from professional, community, collegiate, and other school organizations throughout New England. The Orphenians, our select choral ensemble, was chosen to perform in San Francisco with Grammy Award winning Chanticleer, one of the world's top male a capella groups. Staples art students have been awarded both first and second prizes in the Congressional Arts Awards district competition and have won first place eight times in the last decade. *Inklings*, the school newspaper, recently received the 2013-14 Gold Medal with All-Colombian honors for Verbal and Visual from Columbia Scholastic Press Association.

The athletic program offers 17 different sports for boys, 18 for girls, and a co-educational sailing team. Last year, 1,015 students participated in an interscholastic sport and 615 students participated in multiple sports. The success of this program matches any other at the school and a Staples team has won a state championship every year between 1997 and 2014.

There are many venues for students to pursue educational opportunities above and beyond the regular course offerings. Within the school year, Staples students can earn college credit in world languages courses through the University of Connecticut (UCONN) Early College Experience program, and students in the Authentic Science Research (ASR) program can earn science credits through the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany. Staples High School partners with Westport Continuing Education to offer courses for advancement and in some cases for credit in summer school as well as for personal enrichment. Staples students may also seek approval for courses at universities and online courses through the department chairs and principal.

Staples High School has partnered with local businesses through its job shadow programs, the career exploration program, the Staples Spectacular Student Challenge, and extensively through its Senior Internship program, in which over 450 seniors participate annually. Staples partners with the Hwa-Chong Institution in Singapore, and has sent students to participate in the Asia-Pacific Youth Leadership Summit each of the last two years and in the International Science Youth forum last January. Additionally, Staples has developed an active student exchange program with Hwa-Chong.

Staples High School is also an active partner with the Westport Arts Advisory Committee and the Permanent Art Collection and Cultural Arts programs. These organizations helped shape the campus into a gallery of works by world-renowned painters, illustrators, photographers, and sculptors, and have provided students with the opportunity to engage in internships, independent studies, and other projects with art, connecting students with future career path and the town's history as an artistic hub.

Students are recognized for their accomplishments in many ways including the principal's Student of the Month program, Most Improved Awards, Fifteen Minutes of Fame articles, news releases for accomplishments by individuals and clubs, teams, and other groups, various departmental awards, a quarterly honor roll, the High Honors Dinner, Tuition Grants Awards, and Staples Awards Night, which includes awards for academics, art, music, drama and the awarding of the Staples Key Award.

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

The Staples High School community inspires learning, fosters integrity, and nurtures empathy.

Staples High School 21st Century Learning Expectations

Adapted from Choo, Sawch, Villanueva, 2011: SEI/Teachers College

Critical Thinking

This unit will give students the opportunity to...

Global Students...

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| Interpreting | Demonstrate knowledge of basic content | Understand main ideas and concepts | Demonstrate in-depth understanding of the content and concepts | Demonstrate in-depth understanding to formulate new interpretations |
| Analyzing | Demonstrate knowledge of basic content | Analyze main ideas and concepts | Demonstrate in-depth analysis of specific ideas and concepts | Analyze specific ideas and concepts with supporting evidence to arrive at new meanings |
| Synthesizing and Making Applications | Demonstrate knowledge of basic content | Identify key ideas and concepts from various aspects of the content | Make connections among key information, ideas and concepts and apply to other contexts | Synthesize key information, ideas and concepts in order to make new applications |
| Evaluating | Make initial judgments and decisions about basic content | Make judgments about content by analyzing some evidence | Make informed judgments about content through a synthesis of ideas and concepts from different aspects of credible evidence | Provide an original in-depth response as a result of evaluating content |

Creative Thinking

This unit will give students the opportunity to...

Global Students...

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Questioning and Curiosity | Ask fact-based questions that show a desire to understand basic content | Ask fact-based questions that show a desire to understand the ideas and concepts in deeper ways | Ask analytical questions that make connections and lead to deeper explorations | Ask new and original questions that lead to deeper explorations |
| Observing and Imagining Possibilities | Make guided observations in order to imagine a straightforward possibility | Make independent observations in order to imagine an alternative possibility | Make informed judgments about what to observe in order to imagine a range of possibilities | Make informed judgments about how to observe in order to create an original possibility |
| Risk-taking and Tolerating Ambiguity | Engage in a simple and unfamiliar problem | Choose an approach to solve a simple and unfamiliar problem | Explore possibilities for approaching a non-routine problem | Explore new possibilities for approaching an ill-defined problem, potentially with multiple solutions |
| Agility and Adaptability | Tolerate new conditions or situations | Accommodate minor changes in conditions or situations | Accept and respond to changes in conditions or situations | Embrace change eagerly and generate new possibilities |

Communication

This unit will give students the opportunity to...

Global Students...

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Reflecting and Meta-analysis† | Participate in teacher guided reflection on learning process/progress | Self-reflect on individual learning process/progress citing evidence | Self-reflect on collaborative learning process/progress citing evidence | Self-reflect on, analyze, and evaluate the process/progress of learning and apply to new contexts |
| Considering Purpose and Varied Media to Express Ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate factual information • Consider a pre-determined audience • Use pre-determined media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate basic ideas and key points • Communicate with a self-selected audience • Choose appropriate media for a specific purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate complex ideas and their nuances • Adapt communication to varied audiences • Use a range of media options for a specific purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate original thoughts/ideas • Creatively present to varied audiences • Effectively use a range of media options to enhance communication |
| Influencing and Negotiating to Reach Goals | Express one's self and/or ideas | Establish credibility in order to advocate for one's self and/or ideas | Advocate for a position/idea while working towards consensus | Nurture innovative and novel ideas to inspire agreement and action of others |
| Collaborating Strategically | Work collaboratively to complete a task | Work collaboratively to acquire a basic understanding of a topic | Work collaboratively in a way that taps into individual strengths of group members | Work collaboratively to generate an original idea/solution |

† Meta-analysis is an examination of one's learning process.

Global Thinking

This unit will give students the opportunity to...

Global Students...

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Engaging in Real-world Problem Solving | Demonstrate knowledge of basic content related to a real-world problem | Demonstrate awareness of the issues, concepts, and implications of a real-world problem | Apply content knowledge to solve a real-world problem | Synthesize content knowledge to create innovative solutions to real-world problems |
| Engaging in Global Issues | Demonstrate knowledge of issues affecting themselves | Demonstrate awareness of issues and concepts affecting their immediate, personal community | Analyze economic, political, scientific, and/or cultural issues and make connections to how they affect their extended community | Synthesize international issues and their implications to develop original ways to promote humanitarian advancements |
| Engaging in Multiple Perspectives | Demonstrate knowledge of an issue from one perspective | Demonstrate awareness of an issue or concept from an opposing perspective | Analyze an issue from multiple perspectives and make connections among these perspectives to gain a deeper understanding | Synthesize multiple perspectives to develop an original empathetic response that will strengthen respect towards others |
| Working Across Disciplines | Demonstrate knowledge from one content area | Demonstrate knowledge of key ideas and concepts from multiple content areas and make simple connections among them | Apply tools, approaches, and concepts from multiple content areas | Synthesize knowledge from multiple content areas to create original ideas |

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

TEACHING AND LEARNING STANDARDS

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

CURRICULUM

INSTRUCTION

**ASSESSMENT OF AND FOR STUDENT
LEARNING**

1

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

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

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

Conclusions

The Staples High School community engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning. The school approved and adopted the current mission statement in June 2014 as the result of an ongoing, reflective process involving all stakeholders within the learning community. Students, building-wide and department administrators, teachers across disciplines and grade levels, and other members of the community, including parents, were actively involved in the process which began in 2013 with the establishment of a guiding committee. The school used department meetings, school-wide faculty meetings, and professional development days to continue this work during 2013 and into 2014. The guiding committee surveyed the staff, students, and other key stakeholders during 2013 and into 2014. Student feedback revealed a need for a simple mission statement with more student-friendly language. This feedback, as with input from other stakeholder groups, was gathered and synthesized to craft three possible core values and beliefs statements. The merits and/or deficiencies of each of the different statements were discussed at a school-wide faculty meeting in May 2014, after which the committee met a final time and, using the suggestions from the previous faculty meeting, crafted a final statement that was adopted by the faculty at its final meeting of the 2013-2014 school year. In addition to being dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive, the process was based upon a review of current research and relevant literature connected to core values. Several members of the guiding committee researched core values and belief statements of a number of school districts in Connecticut. Research included findings by the district's former director of secondary education and ideas derived from Robert Putnam's work in his book, *Bowling Alone*, copies of which were purchased for each member of the committee. In response to the initial stakeholder input and the subsequent review of relevant research, the committee created a list of 11 questions/discussion prompts used on a February 2014 professional development day to assist faculty members in articulating what they felt core values and beliefs meant to them. Many teachers, parents, and students are able to state in general terms the school's core values and

beliefs. The statement is readily available and published on the school's website. Because the school community engaged in a dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process informed by current research-based practices to identify and commit to its core values and beliefs about learning, many stakeholders feel invested in inspiring learning, fostering integrity, and nurturing empathy at Staples High School. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, school leadership)

Staples High School has challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations for all students, which address academic competencies. The school has just begun to identify civic and social school-wide expectations. Although the school has developed descriptive, school-wide rubrics for its academic learning expectations, these rubrics are not analytic and do not yet clearly identify targeted acceptable levels of achievement. In August 2010, the Westport Public Schools' superintendent presented a challenge to the K-12 faculty and asked for volunteers from each school in the district to come together to create a task force to reflect upon current practice and curriculum and to re-imagine how Westport schools could address the needs of students in the 21st century. Representatives from all the district schools worked collaboratively to identify challenging and measurable 21st century academic learning expectations for all students across all grade levels and disciplines. These expectations are highlighted and defined in what evolved into a living document known as the Westport 2025 Lens. The task force used Tony Wagner's research on the *Seven Survival Skills for Careers, College, and Citizenship* to help them review current practices and student experiences and to identify key 21st century skills. In 2011, the superintendent announced the Westport Education 2025: Meeting the Global Challenge initiative. Westport schools partnered with Teachers College of Columbia University to gain access to data about top-performing schools around the world. The current iteration of the Lens contains four domains that address academic competencies: critical thinking and problem solving, creativity, oral and written communication skills, and global citizenship. The Westport Lens provides a district-wide framework for the opportunity to examine curriculum, instruction, and assessment within a paradigm emphasizing 21st century student outcomes. The school community has begun to integrate the Lens into

curriculum, instruction and assessment. The four domains are displayed on posters in classrooms throughout the building. The school community recognizes the need to develop expectations and rubrics for the areas of social and civic responsibilities. In August 2014, the directors of secondary and primary education, research and professional development, announced a district-wide goal to create and incorporate a fifth domain in the Westport 2025 Lens specifically targeting social, civic, and ethical expectations. A November 2014 presentation introduced Staples High School faculty to the fifth domain and later in the school year, a community conversation was held in which K-12 breakout groups of parents discussed the benefits of 21st century expectations, which included character education. The work to develop the fifth domain of the Lens has begun and is ongoing, but is not yet complete. Currently, the school-wide rubrics describe in general terms what achievement is expected in the related school-wide expectations, but the rubrics are not analytic. The school has yet to identify clearly what students must do to be successful on each learning expectation. The rubrics do not yet have clearly identified targeted high levels of achievement that use the same terminology, such as categories of “does not meet expectation” and “approaching expectation.” Teachers and administrators recognize that these school-wide rubrics are in the formative stages and that more work must be done before the expectations and rubrics can be fully integrated into curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Teachers in all departments are also engaged in the process of aligning the objectives of the Common Core State Standards to the outcomes identified by the Lens. For example, the English department has collaboratively created an argument writing rubric, which the entire department uses to assess student writing that is aligned to both the objectives of the Lens and the Common Core. Thus, with the creation of an additional fifth domain in the Westport 2025 Lens that addresses civic and social learning expectations and with the creation of the school-wide rubrics that are analytic for all expectations, the school community will be able to fully identify and assess targeted high levels of student achievement and ensure that all students achieve the school’s 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, school leadership, teacher interviews, panel presentation, student work, Endicott survey, teachers, students)

Staples High School's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations are actively reflected in the culture of the school, have begun to shape curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom, and guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions, and resource allocations. The Westport 2025 Lens has begun to permeate teachers' discussions and plans at Staples focus on student learning. Just as the Lens encourages self-reflection within the learning process, so, too, Staples strives to continuously reflect upon best practices by supporting a culture that solicits feedback to achieve continuous improvement. Posters displaying the four domains of the 2025 Lens are visible throughout rooms and hallways of the school. Teachers' classroom instructional strategies are beginning to integrate the use of the four domains of critical thinking, creative thinking, global thinking and communication. Stakeholders view the school as a community of learners who value learning. Students and staff agree that Staples High School is a place for all to succeed, and decisions are made on the basis of what is best for each student. The school culture is one that embraces opportunities to respond to student, teacher, and community needs. Every second Friday of the month, the Advanced Culinary Arts students, design their own menus, prepare hearty meals, and then serve dinner at a community kitchen for the Homes for Hope organization. The guidance department initiated the resilience project after members of the department noted a steady increase in the number of stress-related issues reported to them by Staples students, particularly suicidal ideation. Today, the Staples resilience project disseminates important information about resilience-based research and, through regular communication, offers teachers and parents practical ways to enhance the development of this disposition in students. Because the Westport 2025 Lens specifically references resilience as a crucial component of creativity, the community possessed a shared language and dedicated resources to translate a perceived need into concrete action grounded in the ideals of the core values. The core values and beliefs of Staples manifest themselves within the school's code of conduct, athletic code of conduct, attendance policy, academic integrity policy, and collaborative team. The Staples student code of conduct is designed to reinforce core values, which include the attainment of academic excellence, respectful actions, the right to a safe and

productive learning environment, and personal responsibility. These values are evident, too, in co-curricular activities. The Staples athletic code of conduct, which prohibits specific behaviors, also emphasizes that students conduct themselves in a manner which reflects positively on the athletic teams, school, and community. In order to foster, teach, and encourage appropriate ethical behavior, Staples created an academic integrity policy in 2002. The policy, which can be found in the Staples High School Student Handbook, contains a range of consequences for the resolution of complaints of cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or other academic misconduct. This process is collaborative, includes representation across academic disciplines within an academic integrity committee, and supports the essential nature of student originality within the creative and critical thinking domains of the Lens. Students express the ability to be assessed multiple times by their teachers during the year with ongoing assessment throughout the semester and year to master a particular subject area. Students think that this is fair and allows them to grasp and master subject content over time. In addition, decision-making and resource allocation have begun to be guided by the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. For example, the recent decision to create a new computer science course was made after a determination that it would help students acquire and develop skills vital in the 21st century. The school is a community in which all staff and students believe their environment inspires learning, fosters integrity, and nurtures empathy. Thus, Staples displays a community embodied by a positive culture, in which the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations have begun to shape curriculum, instruction, and assessment in every classroom and to guide the school's policies, procedures, decisions and resource allocations. (self-study, teachers, students, parents, school leadership, panel presentation)

Staples High School reviews and revises its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations based upon research as well as upon district and school community priorities, but not as much based upon multiple data sources. The new Staples High School core values and beliefs statement was approved by the faculty's unanimous vote at its final faculty meeting of the 2013-2014 school year.

Despite the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations being fairly recently completed, the community has continued its work in this area by identifying the need for more specific standards in the area of civic and social competencies, and it is a district-wide goal to create and incorporate a fifth domain on the Westport 2025 Lens specifically targeting social, civic, and ethical expectations, a process that is ongoing. The basic framework of the 2025 Lens, including its four main critical capacities, was designed by the committee of Westport stakeholders working together with scholars at Teachers College at Columbia University. The task force subsequently revised the Lens according to Westport's identified needs. Staples High School maintains a continuous and rigorous relationship to current research regarding best practices. Articles on current educational ideas are continuously sent by email from department chairpersons to the teachers of each department, and these ideas are often integrated into discussions within department and faculty meeting time. In addition, Staples teachers engage in continuous research and scholarship themselves. For example, two teachers, Lauren Francese and Rebecca Marskick, collaborated to write the book, *Stretching Beyond the Textbook: Reading and Succeeding with Complex Texts in the Content Areas*, published by Scholastic in 2014. The district allocates resources to support the pursuit of teachers as learners and researchers, which highlights the priorities embedded in the Lens and applies those domains to teachers and students. While curriculum and instruction have begun to be adjusted based upon review of sources such as SAT and Advanced Placement (AP) test scores, the lack of analytic school-wide rubrics that clearly identify targeted acceptable levels of student achievement of the 21st century learning expectations limits the current ability of the school to collect adequate data that could be used to revise these learning expectations. Therefore, the use of relevant, multiple data sources will enhance the school's ability to review and revise its core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, school leadership, students)

Commendations

1. The dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process that involved stakeholders in crafting the school's statement of core values and beliefs
2. The extensive use of current research-based best practices in the development of the school's statement of core values and beliefs
3. The community-wide commitment to the core values and beliefs of inspiring learning, fostering integrity, and nurturing empathy
4. The creation of challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations that address academic competencies
5. The high degree of school community support for the four domains of the Westport 2025 Lens
6. The active reflection of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations in the school's safe, positive and respectful culture
7. The emphasis upon and support for teachers to be learners as a school and community priority

Recommendations

1. Identify and define 21st century learning expectations in the areas of civic and social competencies
2. Create school-wide analytic rubrics for each of the school's 21st century learning expectations
3. Identify acceptable levels of achievement for each of the school's 21st century learning expectations
4. Collect and use data to review and revise further the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations



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

The Staples High School (SHS) curriculum is, in most ways, purposefully designed to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations. The curriculum has been aligned with an initiative entitled Westport 2025: Meeting the Global Challenge, developed in collaboration with the Center for the Professional Education of Teachers at Columbia University. Launched in 2010, Westport 2025 is a district-wide curriculum initiative that aims to identify students' critical-thinking, creative thinking, communication and problem-solving skills. The Westport 2025 Lens was developed in order for teachers and administrators to examine curriculum units and align them to these 21st century learning expectations. Staples High School has begun a process of continuous curriculum review using the Lens as a guiding tool. This organic model, to a large extent, is responsive to changing state and federal mandates, and data about student learning. The school has yet to collect and review data regarding achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. When SHS fully integrates the school-wide learning expectations into the curriculum design and formalizes the collection and review of achievement data for its school-wide learning expectations, all students will be better able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (teacher interviews, self-study, panel presentation, school leadership, teachers)

The curriculum is written and revised in a common format that includes units of study with essential questions, concepts, content, and skills, and the school's 21st century learning expectations. The school completed input of these units into the software program, Atlas, in the spring of 2015. The Westport Public Schools (WPS) use of this curriculum mapping software provides the opportunity for greater coordination of curriculum among teachers, consistency of curriculum delivery, and is in the early stages of becoming a planning tool for teachers. New teachers find this curriculum information in Atlas to be useful. The school has yet to add instructional strategies and assessment practices to essential questions, concepts, content, skills, and the school's 21st century learning expectations into the curriculum mapping program. Thus, when the school also includes instructional strategies and

assessment practices, it will be better able to consistently deliver curriculum in all content areas to ensure student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, department leaders, school leadership)

The curriculum emphasizes depth of understanding and application of knowledge through ethical use of technology, inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, and authentic learning opportunities both in and out of school. The written curriculum does not yet emphasize cross-disciplinary learning and many teachers express a need for even more time for cross-disciplinary collaboration; however, units are planned and implemented. The smooth transition to a full Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy in the 2015-2016 school year is an example of the school community's application of knowledge through ethical use of technology. In addition, incoming ninth graders participate in a library/technology orientation and in the creation of an individual electronic portfolio. Guidelines for the ethical use of technology are also included in the student handbook provided each student during the first week of school. Teachers review the handbook and emphasize clear consequences for plagiarizing electronic information. All tenth grade students write a research paper during their English class. During this process, teachers instruct students about how to ethically use technology, specifically how to quote, summarize, paraphrase, and cite research. According to the Endicott survey, 91.5 percent of students believe that they are, "knowledgeable about the ethical use of technology." Inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking are all key components of all curricula, embraced by the district-wide Westport 2025 Lens and mapped in the Atlas software. Every discipline across the curriculum attempts to engage students in higher order thinking. In a United States History class, students engage in political roundtable discussions to address such topics as liberty versus security and federalism vs. states' rights. In forensics classes, science students apply higher order thinking skills when engaging in a mock trial entitled "The Crime to End all Crimes." World language classes have replaced traditional written tests with more authentic performance-based assessments. For example, students in a Spanish class are required to demonstrate oral and written communication skills by

engaging in spontaneous dialogues using concepts studied in class. Also, in the Authentic Science Research course, students undertake a personal research problem to discover something unknown. In the Endicott survey, 93.8 percent of the staff and 87.6 percent of the students express the belief that "the formal curriculum in my subject area emphasizes inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking." Authentic learning opportunities are available both inside and outside of classes. For example, in a Geometry B class, students calculate and convert the area of their teacher's basement to determine how many tiles to purchase to cover the floor. Child development class students visit Coleytown Elementary School weekly to work with children and apply what they learn in the classroom to their interactions with students there. Life Skills class students run a dry cleaning service and work part time at Marshall's. Staples students also participate annually in the Moody's Mega Math Challenge and Staples Spectacular Student Challenge, during which students spend an entire day trying to solve a problem based upon a societal issue, such as the sustainability of social security or the problem of childhood obesity. The SHS curriculum ends with the culminating senior internship experience with students using skills and knowledge accumulated over their high school careers applied in a professional setting. The Environmental Studies course makes connections between the social studies and the science curricula. The English department now offers a Visual Literacy course that examines the genre of the graphic novel with the creation of the students' original graphic novels. The course is taught by an English teacher with an art teacher who consults on the creation of the student visual work. In the radio broadcast of *A Christmas Carol*, the media and drama departments collaborate on a cross-disciplinary, authentic learning opportunity. Students also have the opportunity for cross-disciplinary connections through a new four-year portfolio system, a four-way Rotary Speech Challenge, as well as in the two student writing publications *Soundings* and *Q.E.D.* Although these interdisciplinary opportunities exist, only 49.7 percent of the staff, according to Endicott survey results, believes, "the curriculum emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning." Thus, the current curriculum emphasizes inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking, authentic learning, and ethical use of technology. When the written curriculum

emphasizes cross-disciplinary learning, even more opportunities for students to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations will occur. (classroom observation, self-study, facility tour, student work, teacher interviews, students, school board, teachers, school leadership)

There is clear alignment between the written and taught curriculum in some areas. SHS is working to improve the process of aligning the written and taught curriculum through the use of Atlas to map curriculum. Individual department chairs oversee that alignment through a teacher evaluation process housed in Protraxx, the Westport Public School's (WPS) evaluation software. As part of the teacher evaluation process, prior to formal classroom observations, teachers use Protraxx to document their lesson plans. To ensure that teachers' lesson plans follow the written curriculum, teachers are asked to explain this connection on their pre-observation form and during their pre-observation conference with their supervisor. The supervisor assesses the teacher's performance using the WPS's Rubric for Effective Teaching. One criteria of the rubric assesses a teacher's "planning of instructional content that is aligned with standards..." Some departments have yet to develop a common, ongoing approach to ensuring alignment of the taught curriculum to the written curriculum. When time permits, many teachers engage in collaborative activities that support the alignment between the written and taught curricula. For example, groups of teachers meet both informally during planning periods and formally during department course-alike meetings to design common experiences. In addition, many teachers work together to create midterm and final exams. In courses where teachers do not use common midterms and finals, department administrators require teachers to submit their midterm and final exams to measure consistency across sections. Scheduling constraints have led to smaller groups of course-alike teachers having common duty or preparation periods in which to plan in common. Some students reported that teachers of the same course often take widely different approaches and focus on different content. Therefore, a more consistent and formal approach to the alignment of the written and taught curriculum will ensure that all students are able to practice and achieve the school's 21st century learning

expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, department leaders, school leadership, teachers, students, Endicott survey)

Effective coordination exists vertically K-12 within each academic area; however, interdepartmental coordination is less prevalent. Departments are either supervised as grades K-12 or 6-12. This structure allows departmental administrators to ensure that vertical curriculum coordination exists. Teachers in most departments are given opportunities during the year to meet with colleagues from middle and, in some cases, elementary schools during staff development days to coordinate curriculum. Teachers in most departments also work on alignment between the middle and high school curriculum to ensure seamless transitions between levels. In the cases of world language and math courses that are taught at both the middle and high school levels, teachers of those classes meet more regularly to establish consistency of the taught curriculum. The physical plant encourages daily opportunities for teachers to work together within each department. The building layout is organized by departments which promotes planned and spontaneous collaboration among teachers in the same department. Department meetings occur one or two times per month. Agenda items include discussion of curriculum mapping, development of essential questions and big ideas, and the creation of shared instructional strategies, and assessments. Interdepartmental articulation is not as strong as intradepartmental and vertical articulation. The facility is large and departments are physically distant from one another. A few classes afford opportunities for cross-curricular learning. The TV Production and the Introduction to Journalism classes collaborated on an episode of "Good Morning Staples." While curricular coordination and vertical articulation within departments are strengths of SHS, teachers express the need for more cross-disciplinary courses as well as time for communication and coordination between departments to look for interdisciplinary opportunities in existing courses. Therefore, while vertical articulation occurs, when effective curricular coordination among all academic areas within the school is expanded, communication and coordination between and among departments will provide

students with more opportunities to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, department leaders, teachers, school leadership, Endicott survey)

The district provides sufficient staffing, instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and the resources in the library/media center to support the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. English and science teachers are assigned to four sections of classes providing English teachers more time during the school day for student writing conferences and giving science teachers more time to set up, take down and evaluate labs. In the 2014-2015 school year, the English department recorded over 3,500 writing conferences. Class size averages 21 students per class. Only classes in music and physical education sometimes exceed 30 students. The "A" level, honors, and AP classes are limited to twenty-five students per section. "B" level classes are limited to 18 students per section. The "C" level classes are limited to 12 students. Changes in student schedules sometimes lead to class sizes of one or two more students than those limits. According to the Endicott survey, 78.5 percent of staff agrees that staffing is sufficient to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. The district provides sufficient instructional materials and supplies to all departments throughout the school. Ample resources are available to help carry out the library/media center's goal of supporting the school-wide curriculum. Department chairs, in the creation of the annual budget, submit requests for instructional materials and supplies and receive what they request. According to one board of education member, their "mantra" is "tell us what you need to develop excellent instruction and we'll work to get it." The Endicott survey indicates that 87 percent of the staff agrees that the school has sufficient instructional materials to implement the curriculum, including the co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Technological needs are met so that teachers may fully implement their curriculum. For example, the school's two world language labs are each staffed by a full-time paraprofessional. The district has moved to a Bring Your Own Device policy beginning in September 2015. Students bring their own laptop, tablet, or similar device to school with them every day. Students whose families are unable to

provide them with such a device are loaned one to use by the school. SHS has the facilities to support its current curriculum. The Endicott survey results indicate that 90.5 percent of students and 95 percent of parents feel that the district provides students with adequate resources to support learning. Despite the fact that SHS is less than ten years old, the school is scheduled at over 99 percent room use. This maximum usage capacity is due to the desire of Staples students to maintain full schedules, as well as the 25-credit graduation requirement. If even more courses are offered, such as additional science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) courses now under consideration, current space use will need to be revised. The district has begun an initiative to re-imagine the use of space with the goal to address not only limits of space of the physical plant, but also the diversity of programs offered at Staples. The resources of the library/media center are sufficient to fully implement the curriculum, including co-curricular programs and other learning opportunities. Library/media specialists collaborate with classroom teachers and school leaders to implement the curriculum. For example, they help ninth grade students select a book for their health class. They also assist all sophomores with their research papers, teaching them how to use the databases to which the school has access. Staples High School offers a wide variety of co-curricular offerings. Students have the opportunity to participate in a myriad of athletic and artistic activities. There are over 100 clubs spanning a wide range of interests. The wide variety includes the Shakespeare Club, Staples Players, Unified Sports, SLOBs, and the Fashion Club. Thus, 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 the other learning opportunities allowing students to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, facility tour, classroom observations, school board, students, school leadership, teachers, parents)

The district provides the school's professional staff with sufficient personnel and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum using assessment results and current research. Although many teachers participate informally in the

development and revision of curriculum, formally dedicated time for such collaboration exists to a lesser extent. The district has two directors of education, research and development, one for grades K-5 and the other for grades 6-12. The role of the director of secondary education is to directly supervise and support the department chairs to ensure that the curricular areas align with and meet the district goals. There are full-time grades 6-12 chairs for some departments and full-time K-12 chairs for music, world languages, physical education, and health. Formed in the fall of 2014, the professional development committee consists of teachers whose goal is to determine what professional development opportunities will be available. Teachers report that they want more formal opportunities to work together on creating and revising units using the Lens. The board of education has begun to increase funding for professional development to align the curriculum with the Lens, although the faculty members consistently report a need for even greater formal time for professional development and curriculum work. The Westport 2025 initiative has used research on theory and practice tied to 21st century education, including Harvard University Graduate School of Education professor Chris Dede's thorough literature review on 21st century global learning. Another resource the district consulted is Tony Wagner's book, *The Achievement Gap*. The district partnered with Teacher's College Studies in Educational Innovation (SEI), leading to the development of Westport 2025 as well as the creation of the Lens. Beyond creating the Lens, the Westport 2025 Committee has created subcommittees to further its work on advancing the grades K-12 curriculum initiatives. For example, a K-12 Strategic Collaborative Committee researched instructional strategies and assessment rubrics, and these materials have begun to be shared with teachers in grades K-12. Another K-12 subcommittee has examined creativity and innovation in the 21st century classroom. Despite the anecdotal evidence of success in this initiative thus far, the school has developed school-wide rubrics, but, as the rubrics are not analytic, it has yet to use data/results from assessments to systematically make revisions to the curriculum to ensure achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. While the school provides staff with sufficient personnel and financial resources for ongoing and collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the

curriculum using assessment results and current research, more formal time for teacher collaboration to review and revise curriculum will ensure that SHS is better able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, Endicott survey, central office personnel, school leadership)

Commendations

1. The beginning and early ongoing efforts to align the curriculum to the 21st century learning expectations in the Westport 2025 Lens
2. The input of units of study with essential questions, concepts, contents, and skills into the Atlas curriculum mapping software
3. The numerous and evolving opportunities for application of knowledge, inquiry and problem solving, higher order thinking and authentic learning opportunities
4. The school's commitment to informed and ethical use of technology in the curriculum
5. The effective vertical curriculum coordination
6. The provision of sufficient staffing levels to fully implement curriculum co-curricular learning opportunities
7. The provision of sufficient instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and library/media center resources to fully implement the curriculum and co-curricular programs
8. The provision of sufficient personnel and financial resources for collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum

Recommendations

1. Formalize the collection and review of data related to the curriculum to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Incorporate instructional strategies and assessment practices into the common curriculum template
3. Develop and implement a plan to more formally align the written and taught curriculum
4. Develop and implement a plan to promote more interdisciplinary learning
5. Develop and implement a plan to provide more formal time for collaboration for the development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum

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 continuously examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. For the past two years, administrators have advised teachers at Staples High School (SHS) to begin to use the Westport 2025 Lens when creating or revising curriculum. These guidelines ask all teachers to "meet the global challenge" of educating students who will graduate with the skills needed to be successful in the 21st century. This directive focuses upon the capacities of critical thinking, creative thinking, communications, and global thinking as specified in the Lens. Additionally, the school's values and beliefs are reflected in teacher instruction. Teachers have begun to facilitate opportunities for students to engage in the elements of the 2025 Lens. Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus students use creative thinking to analyze the meaning of constant velocity. In a social studies course, students are asked to analyze the global impact of modern day slave trade. As a result of examining their instruction to ensure consistency with the school's values and beliefs, teachers have begun to help students to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, classroom observations, students, teachers, school leadership)

Teachers' instructional practices support the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations by personalizing instruction; 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; and integrating technology. Although some teachers have instructional practices that engage students in cross-disciplinary learning, several teachers still indicate that they would like to have increased formal time to develop cross-disciplinary materials and classes. Teachers personalize instruction for their students to allow them to achieve to their highest capabilities. In one English teacher's ninth grade class, students are assigned an essay and each individual chooses an essay question based upon his or her own reading strengths and analytical skills. The Culinary Arts II course requires students to select individual recipes and formulas

to build upon and improve their skills. Students are encouraged to develop their own creativity as talented chefs. Further, teachers across the disciplines are available before and after school and throughout the school day to offer extra help and support for all students. Students reported regularly accessing help from all teachers in the building. Further, students stated that they feel comfortable asking teachers to extend deadlines or to make other alterations to assignments to help them balance their many responsibilities including other high-level courses, sports, clubs, and activities. Parents also confirmed that the staff is very willing to personalize instructional content to ensure student success at all levels. Teachers engage students as active and self-directed learners by assigning projects that require students to be thoughtful, reflective, and active members in the classroom. Math and science teachers ask students to create their own math or scientific questions and to help their classmates find the answers. Physics teachers provide their students with rubrics that require use of the scientific method to solve problems. The art teachers offer numerous activities and opportunities for students to work both cooperatively and independently. Instruction emphasizes inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking. Economics students work to analyze and problem-solve contemporary issues including the cost of higher education. Students report that in science classes they are asked to reflect upon how they would apply information or processes from labs to real world situations. During a forensic science unit students participate in a mock trial that is based upon the use of forensic evidence. They are required to learn how their scientific evidence would be presented and examined by judges, attorneys, witnesses, and forensic specialists. In the Global Themes class students learn about the elements that make societies powerful and then assess historical and contemporary cultures to determine “What makes or breaks a society?” The culinary class’s “Iron Chef” competition requires students to create a menu based upon mandatory, diverse ingredients and both cook a meal and write about their research and decision-making. Special education teachers work alongside regular education teachers to modify assignments that maintain an emphasis upon problem-solving techniques that promote higher order thinking skills for all identified students. Teachers frequently create lessons designed for students to apply knowledge and

skills to authentic tasks. In geometry classes, students are asked to find solutions to everyday situations such as understanding the cost of lawn care or building supplies. The Mandarin language class creates announcements in the target language to encourage students visiting from the Hwa Chong Institute in Singapore to get involved in SHS activities. Students are involved in media production classes that allow them to produce television and radio programs, learn to invest money and handle household accounts, create meals for home or for catered events, and create public service announcements to encourage safe driving for all students. Teachers of government classes encourage students to take part in their local community to connect their learning to real-world issues. SHS students regularly practice self-assessment and reflect upon a variety of learning activities. Often students are given class-specific or course-specific rubrics at the start of an assignment to use as guidelines for their learning. Later, they self-assess their work using these same rubrics before turning in products for teacher assessment. Teachers frequently assign journal or blog entries for students to reflect upon their own growth and achievement goals. English students reported being asked to reflect upon written assignments prior to handing them in. These opportunities for self-reflection allow students to assess their degree of understanding and the level of need they might have for additional guidance. Art students reflect upon projects and assess the quality of expression exhibited. Further, the library/media specialists have created an electronic portfolio initiated with the class of 2018 that requires students to begin to collect, to track, and to evaluate their progress related to the capacities in the 2025 Lens. Parents spoke highly of these portfolios and said that their students are becoming more reflective about their growth and learning. Teachers at SHS regularly integrate technology into their instruction including the use of SMART Boards, Twitter, blogs, wikis, discussion boards, and class websites. Science classes use Logger Pro and Vernier interfaces to measure and record motion and force. Teachers post assignments on Schoology, and this year the school moved to a mandatory Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) for all students. Having student devices in the room allows teachers to design instruction that asks students to answer their own questions in real-time without teacher assistance. Students reported that having their

own devices helps them take notes and keeps their information organized. The library/media center has a help desk run both by adults and students to facilitate the use of various types of technology. Although some teachers collaborate with peers from other disciplines to create cross-disciplinary alliances between courses, many teachers indicate that they would like increased time to develop additional cross-disciplinary materials. Currently, some math teachers use political data to teach discrete math. Language teachers individually pair with the culinary teacher to create lessons that connect students to the foods of their target countries. Students reported that English teachers come into their social studies classes occasionally to offer guidance for writing. Also, teachers promote informal connections between disciplines. In the Bible and Myth class students are asked to tie ideas from stories that they have read to current events including material learned in the Animal Behavior class. Students value these connections. As a result of teachers' commitment to using instructional practices that promote personalization, active and self-directed learning, inquiry, problem solving, higher order thinking, authentic tasks, self-assessment, reflection, and the use of technology, the school can strongly support the achievement of 21st century learning. (classroom observations, self-study, student shadowing, panel presentation, teacher interviews, teachers, students, parents, school leadership, school board)

Many teachers adjust their instructional practices to meet the individual needs of students by using formative assessment, strategically differentiating lessons, structuring purposeful group learning activities, and providing additional support and alternative strategies within the regular classroom and before and after school as needed. The use of formative assessments is evident in all content areas. Teachers use a variety of software like Schoology, Evernote, and various other online sites to continuously check on the progress of their students during both formative and summative assessments. In one class, for example, an Advanced Placement (AP) Economics teacher uses five Poll Everywhere multiple-choice questions to learn that, while students have mastered four topics on supply and demand, the topic of marginal utility needs further review because only 45 percent of students mastered that question. Students indicated that the teacher uses such information to structure further class discussion.

English teachers use formative pre-tests to identify student strengths and weaknesses on fiction and nonfiction reading. Teachers provide writing rubrics to students when writing is reviewed, and students identify their own writing strengths, critical thinking, content mastery, and presentation of work. Teachers then analyze student feedback and student work, and differentiate instruction based upon individual student strengths and needs. Teachers work to differentiate instruction for students. They also integrate cooperative and collaborative learning within their instructional time. For example, in a full-inclusion social studies class, students work together to decipher primary documents, answer historical questions, and complete summative assessments. In honors U.S. History classes students work together in non-fiction book groups to discuss the text, annotations, and connections to American ideals. Students also evaluate the work of fellow team members. All group members are encouraged to provide constructive critiques and feedback. Parents reported that despite the fact that their children have very different learning styles and needs, teachers provide instruction that promotes individual student's progress. Many teachers design lessons that allow students who complete work more quickly to move on to other material while their peers finish a previous lesson or receive extra help. Differentiated instruction also includes technology driven units of instruction, personalized learning plans, use of grouping patterns based upon levels of achievement, and student choice of assignments. School-wide and individual teacher initiatives support effective group learning activities. In many English and history classrooms, teachers break the classes into student stations. Teachers facilitate small group discussion for students to have a similar understanding of the material being studied. In the Global Themes summative project on imperialism, students work together to develop theories and present real-world solutions to the legacies of imperialism. In addition, teachers attend workshops to learn how to better determine student roles for group projects. Labor is divided. For example, one student might be working on the written product, another is focused on the oral presentation, and yet another is working on the technology for the project. Teachers break students into groups to facilitate discussion, problem solving, peer review, and the development of communication skills. Another important component of instruction

is the provision of additional support and alternative strategies within each regular classroom. As teachers work to implement state and Common Core frameworks, literacy skills are targeted as an area for extra support and new techniques. The literacy specialist offers additional support for students and provides lessons on particular areas where some students are struggling. In a U.S. History classroom, one teacher assigns different levels of texts based upon student reading and comprehension levels to various student stations. Newsela is available across disciplines to introduce students to current events and to allow students to read at a personalized reading Lexile. Teachers assess comprehension with Newsela's online quizzes and immediately access that data. Learning centers, staffed by teachers from all disciplines, are available to the entire school for students to access during their unassigned periods. Many students emphasize how easy it is for them to obtain additional help outside the regular classroom through these learning centers. As a result, teachers at SHS effectively adjust instruction to incorporate the use of formative assessment during instructional time, strategic differentiation, purposeful organization of group learning activities, and provide additional support and alternative strategies within the classroom to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, classroom observations, student shadowing, panel presentation, facility tour, school leadership, parents, teachers, students, school board, teacher interviews)

Teachers, individually and collaboratively, improve their instructional practices by informally examining student work, using feedback from a variety of sources, including students, other teachers, and supervisors, examining current research, and engaging in professional discourse on instructional practice. SHS has not yet created a formal system for obtaining feedback from parents in order to improve instructional practices. Further, teachers have identified the need for a more formal process through which they can routinely examine and discuss student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. Teachers in all disciplines informally share student work with each other and make adjustments to their instruction to increase student success. Further, many teachers look at student work to reflect upon and improve instruction for the current year and to prepare

improvements for the following school year. Student work is separated into categories: work that satisfies and/or exceeds expectations and work that does not meet expectations. Teachers enrich instruction by using feedback from a variety of sources. Supervisors work with school leadership and teachers to reflect upon instructional practices through many informal discussions. The formal teacher review process includes examination of student learning objectives and indicators of student growth and development. Teachers exchange feedback on lesson plans and other instructional materials with their peers through many informal conversations, and during some formal professional development sessions, curriculum work, and department meetings. Many teachers give student feedback surveys at the midpoint and endpoint of the year to gather student perspectives in order to improve instruction. Students indicated that some teachers ask for their input at the end of each unit or quarter. Many students said that they believe the teachers have taken their input seriously and that teachers make changes in their instructional practices to improve student performance during the school year. SHS teachers have yet to develop a formal program to obtain parent feedback to improve their instructional strategies. The school system is dedicated to providing teachers with current research to improve instructional practices. As a result of reviewing student work and achievement on certain writing assignments, teachers identified an area of writing where they needed more instructional training. The school board approved bringing in an expert in this area and providing current research on how to improve instructional practices in this writing area. Teachers also report reading articles, attending seminars, and interacting with Internet communities to keep up on current instructional research. In addition, the culinary department discusses the latest trends in diet with the wellness committee and adjusts instructional materials and focus. Teachers are committed to sharing successful instructional practices and engaging in discourse focused on instructional practices. Peers share materials with new teachers and help them with any concerns about classroom instruction. Teachers who attend conferences share information with peers either in informal meetings or during planned professional development days or department meetings. Social studies teachers all know they will be responsible for presenting

“work in progress” reports where they share instructional strategies that they are trying out in the classroom. Further, teachers are eager to share instructional strategies that increase student performance across the disciplines. While the SHS community has a strong focus on improving instructional practices, teachers recognize that they do not consistently use student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments to improve student learning as there is not a formal process through which they can routinely examine and discuss student achievement data from a variety of formative and summative assessments. As a result of the staff’s informal individual and collaborative commitment to improve instructional practices through examining student work, using feedback from a variety of sources, examining current research, and engaging in professional discourse focused on instructional practice, the school ensures that the majority of instructional practices enhance student learning. When a more formal process is implemented to systematically review student work and data from both formative and summative assessments, teachers will be better able to improve instructional practices to achieve the school’s 21st century learning expectations for all students. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers, students, school board, school leadership)

Teachers, as adult learners and reflective practitioners, maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. Outside the classroom, teachers often work to maintain their expertise in specific content areas. Each month, three Mondays are allocated to school-wide faculty meetings, department meetings, or other cross-curricular commitments. It is not uncommon for teachers and staff to reflect upon their content area and seek out new and innovative methods for improving their pedagogy. Professional development days and department meetings include a variety of activities from facilitated Individualized Educational Program (IEP) development activities to presentations on behavior management from experts in the field. The culture of the school supports professional growth opportunities for the teachers. School leadership and teachers routinely share professional real life experiences to reflect the global aspects of the 2025 Lens. For example, the social studies department used professional development time to showcase summer workshops and to encourage teachers to take

advantage of local, regional, national, and international programs. Teachers have shared insights and experiences gained from travels to China, participation in a Fulbright Program to Morocco, and time spent with the Reagan Foundation. School leadership encourages teachers and department chairs to contribute ideas for professional days. The district also supports teachers when they teach courses for the first time. At Fordham University's Lincoln Center Campus, a new AP Micro and Macroeconomics teacher took a summer course to learn best practices and new content. Other teachers have used this district-sponsored program to prepare to teach AP courses including English, calculus, world languages, and world history. As a result, teachers are reflective practitioners, who maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers, parents, school leadership, school board)

Commendations

1. The instructional practices that are examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
2. The personalized instruction
3. The instruction that compels students to participate as active and self-directed learners
4. The instruction that emphasizes and engages students in inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking
5. The instruction that provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
6. The instruction that engages students in self-assessment and reflection
7. The instruction that is enhanced through the integration of technology into the classroom
8. The teachers' use of formative assessment during instructional time to adjust their instructional practice to meet individual student needs
9. The ability and willingness of teachers to strategically differentiate instructional practices to meet the needs of diverse learners
10. The purposeful organization of group learning activities
11. The ability to provide additional support and alternative strategies to support students with diverse learning needs within the regular classroom

12. The teachers' informal examination of student work to improve instruction
13. The teachers' use of feedback from a variety of sources to adjust and improve instructional techniques
14. The teachers' eagerness to examine current research and to use that research to change instructional strategies to improve student learning
15. The teachers' commitment to engaging in professional discourse focused upon instructional practice
16. The teachers' efforts to maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices

Recommendations

1. Increase opportunities for teachers to engage students in cross-disciplinary activities and lessons to support student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Create and implement a formal process to systematically review student work and data from both formative and summative assessments to improve instructional practices
3. Create and implement a process to obtain parent feedback to improve instructional practices

4

Assessment of and for Student Learning

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

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

- standardized assessments
- data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions
- survey data from current students and alumni.

11. Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning.

Conclusions

The professional staff is in the initial stages of employing a formal process based upon school-wide rubrics to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. The school community is deeply invested in their 21st century learning expectations, referred to as the Westport 2025 Lens. However, the high school is still in the early stages of integrating each of the four lenses, which are critical thinking and problem solving, creativity, oral and written communication skills, and global citizenship, into the curriculum and using school-wide rubrics to measure achievement. Teachers and administrators note that a fifth domain for civic and social expectations needs to be developed and added into the character lens. Moreover, the current school-wide rubrics are descriptive, not analytic making it difficult to accurately measure each of the school-wide 21st century learning expectations. The Staples High School (SHS) steering committee created two- and five-year plans that include completion of the framework for the Westport 2025 civic, social, and character expectations and alignment of school-wide rubrics to ensure that all students fulfill these expectations. Professional development programs provide the staff with opportunities to review and align the current curriculum with the school-wide expectations. Currently, teachers post information regarding their individual courses on class webpages in Schoology and on the open grading portal, eSchool. A district-wide committee created the Westport 2025 Lens. A high school committee created a user guide for staff to begin to connect the school-wide rubrics related to the Westport 2025 Lens. Each department has focused upon one of the 21st century learning expectations. The library media specialists began working with the class of 2018 in collaboration with freshman English teachers on a student electronic portfolio that aligns directly with the school's 21st century learning expectations in each domain of the Westport 2025 Lens. When the district completes the addition of the fifth domain, this will be added to students' electronic portfolio on the Google site. As a result, when the school completes and implements a fifth domain including civic and social expectations and employs school-wide analytic rubrics, the school will be able to assess whole-school and individual student progress in achieving their

21st century learning expectations. (self-study, panel presentation, school leadership, students, parents, teachers)

Although the school has yet to fully develop and implement school-wide analytic rubrics and to integrate the school-wide 21st century expectations into the curriculum, the professional staff has begun to communicate individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations to students, their families, and the school community. The Schoology page for each class has the 21st century learning expectations posted for student and parent awareness. Further, teachers have open gradebooks on eSchool that clearly illustrate student progress. Schoology was adopted at the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year. Expansion of the use of this platform as a communication tool continues to increase student and family awareness of academic achievement. The use of eSchool reporting was amended to include comments on student progress toward achievement of course-specific rubrics. Once teachers are fully trained in the use of eSchool comments, parents and students will be more fully informed of individual student progress. The use of electronic portfolios will provide students and their families with additional indicators of progress in the attainment of these various skills. Students in the English department also receive direct, personalized assessment of their progress on individual pieces of writing by conferencing with English teachers. During the 2013-2014 school year, Westport Public Schools hosted an evening for parents and the community entitled "Parent University." The purpose of this event was for parents and community members to learn more about the various instructional and curricular changes made in order to help students develop 21st century skills, so that the district would begin to have the opportunity to report its progress in achieving the 21st century learning expectations as outlined by the Westport 2025 initiative. In March 2015, parents were again invited to participate in a community conversation centered on civic, social, and ethical intelligence as the district sought feedback on the creation of a fifth domain of the Lens. Assessment of academic progress and communication about that progress has been in place for a long time. Increased use of the electronic records open to students and parents has improved communication about student achievement. The

school has begun to make connections between the curriculum, academic achievement, and the 21st century learning expectations, and it has begun to communicate with students and parents about the connections between academic achievement and the school-wide expectations, but recognizes there is more work to do before those connections are securely established. Thus, when SHS has more fully integrated its 21st century learning expectations into curriculum and into assessment using school-wide analytic rubrics, it will be able to communicate clearly individual student and whole-school achievement of these expectations to students, parents, and the school community. (self-study, panel presentation, school leadership, teachers, student work, parents, students).

The SHS community already collects much data and is aware of the need to even further disaggregate and analyze data to identify and respond to inequities in student achievement. Currently, data from standardized tests, such as Connecticut Academic Performance Tests (CAPT) and Advanced Placement (AP) tests, are shared with both administrative and teaching staff. These data are used to respond strategically to the inequities found in student achievement. In all departments, teachers have begun to develop and to continue to develop common assessments; in some cases, these assessments are also scored collaboratively. This process allows teachers to examine relevant data as a means of making informed decisions about changes to curriculum, resources, leveling, and instruction in order to meet the specific needs of their students. Common assessments include both formative and summative assessments. The five-year strategic plan for SHS also includes the development of a school-wide data team to further increase the use of data to inform development of instructional practices and curriculum revision. Informally within departments, teachers analyze data from standardized test scores to modify instruction. However, at this time there is no method in place or school-wide effort to disaggregate and analyze assessment data in a formal, systematic way. As a result, while the professional staff informally collects and examines data already, the disaggregation and analysis of data will be enhanced when these processes become more formalized increasing the school's ability respond to any inequities in student achievement. (self-study, teachers, department leaders, school leadership)

Prior to each unit of study, many teachers have begun to explicitly communicate the school's 21st century learning expectations. Members of the school community agree that they are well aware of the Westport 2025 Lens and that it aligns with the work students are doing in the school's units of study. According to the Endicott survey, 66 percent of students, 76 percent of staff, and 78 percent of parents agree that 21st century learning expectations and related unit-specific goals are communicated to students prior to the delivery of a unit of study. Teachers use Schoology, Google Docs and Atlas curriculum mapping software to communicate unit specific goals. For some units the science department has explicitly communicated a rubric strip that relates to 21st century learning expectations. Many teachers note that goals described prior to units of study are often implicitly connected to the 21st century learning expectations although these goals might not be specifically worded in the terminology of the 2025 Westport Lens. Such alignment has yet to be tightened. For a long time, teachers have used departmental and course-specific rubrics and expectations and communicate this information to students prior to units of study. Students indicate that they are sometimes aware of the connection between the 2025 Westport Lens and its use in their daily instruction and unit plans. However, students indicate that they have a much clearer understanding of course-specific learning goals that will be used for assessment prior to units of study. Teachers in all subject areas communicate intermediate and course-long learning expectations through the year in a variety of ways including course descriptions and syllabi, unit assignments, and project and performance outlines using a variety of different software programs. As a result, students have a good understanding of course-specific learning goals for their classes, and when teachers more fully integrate the 21st century learning expectations into the curriculum, they will be better able to ensure that all students have a strong understanding of those school-wide expectations and of how they will be assessed prior to units of study. (self-study, students, teachers, parents, department leaders, school leadership, classroom observations, student work, Endicott survey)

Prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with the corresponding rubrics. Course-specific rubrics have been for a long time an essential tool for providing students objective feedback that can be used for reflection, revision, and new learning. To that end, teachers in the Staples community have developed a wide collection of reading, writing, thinking, and performance rubrics that are used consistently with students. Students encounter and are asked to use rubrics on a daily basis in several departments. For example, physical education teachers have designed and implemented a department-wide rubric to assess student performance. This assessment on a ten-point scale happens daily for every student on a variety of performances. Because student learning in the area of world languages also relies heavily upon performances and active participation, the world languages department has also designed a number of rubrics to assess presentation skills, speaking skills, and interpersonal communication skills. Other departments frequently provide students with course-specific rubrics for summative assessments. These rubrics are usually given to students at the beginning of a unit or project and again once the summative assessment is complete. According to the 2013 Endicott survey, 81.4 percent of students agree that they are given rubrics before an assignment. Additionally, rubrics are used to provide students with the opportunity to reflect upon their learning throughout the course of a project followed by opportunities to revise work and to submit revisions. For example, the English department uses an argument writing rubric to assess students' ability to write cogent, persuasive argument papers; this rubric is posted on the department webpage and is used not only to provide summative assessment, but formative assessment, as well. Many examples of student work contain attached rubrics that have been handed out ahead of time. As a result, prior to summative assessments, teachers provide students with corresponding course-specific rubrics enabling them to know what they are expected to learn and what will be an acceptable level of performance. (self-study, Endicott survey, department leaders, teacher interviews, school leadership, classroom observations, students, teachers, student work)

In each unit of study, teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments. The faculty at SHS has been engaged in long-standing and ongoing conversation about assessment, including lengthy discussion and planning regarding a Capstone assessment for seniors. With a senior internship already in place, discussion has focused upon how to engage in a broader assessment of the college- and career-readiness of students. More than 95 percent of the faculty agrees that there is significant variation of assessments used throughout the curriculum. Performance-based projects that are built use a number of formative assessments leading up and prior to summative assessments. The faculty continues to work on developing a greater understanding of formative assessment and its importance for increasing students' academic achievement. Many teachers use formative assessment at any time during a class or lesson. The results of such assessments are used to shape instruction. Examples of formative assessment include short, ungraded quizzes, entrance and exit slips, evaluation charts to interpret short videos, discussions in target languages about specific subjects, the use of a "wave" pattern to ascertain where students started, where they were after the first example, and where they ended, and a "five fingers" activity that allows students to show how much of a concept they understand. As a result, teachers employ a wide range of assessment strategies, including formative and summative assessments that ensure all students are able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, classroom observations, teachers, school leadership, department leaders, students, student work)

Teachers sometimes collaborate in formal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Many of the department and course-alike meetings that are formally scheduled throughout the year allow teachers time to collaborate on assessments and grading practices to ensure fairness and consistency. Many teachers more often collaborate informally in course-alike groups through use of Google Docs and in other creative ways. Although teachers expressed a desire for more formally scheduled common planning time, they have been creative in using the informal time they do have. Many teachers use Google Docs as a means of

collaborating in lieu of face-to-face meetings when it comes to creating common rubrics, assignments, or other forms of assessment. In addition, some professional development days and summer curriculum work include some formal time to collaborate on assessments. At the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, English teachers collaborated on the development of benchmark common writing assessments connected to student summer reading. They used the assessments to determine students' ability levels regarding their writing skills at the start of the year. Teachers in course-alike groups in the math department collaborate weekly to discuss, create, and revise test questions to incorporate student data and feedback. Some math teachers have teamed together to grade a single teacher's quiz to check for consistency of grading practices. Many teachers collaborate regularly in informal ways on the creation, analysis, and revision of formative and summative assessments, including common assessments. Thus, when this process of collaboration is more formalized, the school will be better able to ensure student achievement. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers, department leaders, school leadership)

Teachers frequently provide specific, timely, and corrective feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work. Teachers use a variety of methods to allow students to review and revise their work. Teachers provide comments on documents including discussions on the Schoology electronic platform. They also conduct writing conferences and return lab report rough drafts to students for review and revision. Additionally, students indicated that they are given sufficient time and support to use teacher feedback effectively. Both teachers and support staff are available before and after school, during prep periods, and in subject-specific learning centers to help students improve their work. In the world languages department, students receive immediate feedback on their ability to speak and use languages through the computer lab. As a result, the specific, timely, and corrective feedback provided by teachers allows students to revise and to substantially improve their work. (self-study, teachers, teacher interviews, students, school leadership, classroom observations, student work)

Many teachers have begun to use formative assessment in their classrooms to modify and revise instruction for the purpose of improving student learning. Some performing arts teachers shape almost

the entirety of their instructional practice around formative assessment. This type of assessment happens very naturally in music and art classrooms involving performance ensembles and presentations. A math teacher gives a “mini-quiz” that is given low weight in the students’ grades. The underlying purpose is to check for understanding. If a significant number of students do poorly, the grade is thrown out and the concept revisited. While this process blurs summative and formative assessment to some extent, teachers note that the mini-quiz essentially provides formative assessment to inform instruction. This practice is widespread across departments. Thus, when all teachers expand their use of formative assessment to inform and adapt their instruction, SHS will be better able to improve learning for all students. (self-study, teachers, teacher interviews, classroom observations, school leadership)

Teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, have yet to examine systematically a range of evidence of student learning for the purpose of revising curriculum and improving instruction including student work, common course and common grade-level assessments, individual and school-wide progress in achieving the schools’ 21st century learning expectations, standardized assessments, data from sending schools, receiving schools, and post-secondary institutions, and survey data from current students and alumni. The school has begun to input much of the curriculum into the Atlas curriculum mapping software, however, the 2013-2014 school year marked the beginning of implementation of a new teacher evaluation system. Teacher and administrator review of data and student work in order to measure student learning and to make suggestions regarding existing curriculum and instructional practices forms a major focus of the evaluative process. All teachers at SHS began to be involved in this process last year. That involvement in the review process is to continue in future years. This review includes using department meeting time, course-alike time, and individual and group conferences with department chairs about student learning objectives and the data and work collected in support of each objective. Time is devoted to this review, as well, during the initial teacher/administrator conference, the mid-year conference, and the end-of-year conference. A small group of SHS staff analyzes data from standardized assessments and present the results at board of

education meetings. SHS recognizes the value of and need for more systematic review of assessment data to inform curriculum development and revision and improvement of instruction. Teachers and administrators point to the need for an interdisciplinary data team. More systematic review of assessment data is a goal embedded in the school's five-year plan. When teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning, including student work, common course and 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, and survey data from current students and alumni, , the school will be better able to revise curriculum and improve instructional practice. (self-study, teachers, school support staff, school leadership, central office personnel, student work, classroom observations, teacher interviews)

Grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised in order to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning. The community has engaged in an ongoing process involving several measures to ensure that grading and reporting practices are consistent and focused upon the district's core values and beliefs about learning. In 2013-2014, SHS formed a committee to review issues associated with the grade reporting system. The grading committee also revisited the language used in the grading policy to ensure greater consistency. This committee made recommendations for improvements to the grading system as a way of increasing fairness and equity in grade calculations. As a result, grading and reporting practices are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure alignment with the school's core values and beliefs about learning (self-study, teacher interviews, department leaders, school leadership, teachers)

Commendations

1. The parent and student awareness of the Westport Lens and the 21st century learning expectations
2. The use of course-specific rubrics given prior to summative assessment

3. The ongoing professional conversation about school-wide assessment strategies
4. The ongoing departmental efforts to improve assessments and to increase consistency of practice
5. The creation of a committee to discuss grading and reporting practices throughout the school

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a formal process based upon school-wide analytic rubrics to assess school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement a plan to consistently communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations prior to each unit of study across all departments
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure consistency in common assessments
4. Develop and implement a plan to use formative assessment consistently across all courses
5. Develop and implement a formal plan so that teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning, including student work, common course and 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, and survey data from current students and alumni to revise curriculum and improve instructional practice

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

11. The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative, reflective, and constructive in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations.
12. The school board and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school.

Conclusions

The Staples High School (SHS) community, by design, 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. The staff and administration of Staples High School have placed an emphasis on creating a learning environment that is safe, positive, and respectful. Teachers and administrators support a school culture that fosters student responsibility for learning resulting in shared ownership, pride, and high expectations for all. The newly developed mission statement specifically incorporates wording to reflect the values of the school community: “The Staples High School community inspires learning, fosters integrity, and nurtures empathy.” The four assistant principals, each responsible for a single grade, ensure that the clear rules outlined in the student code of conduct are enforced. At the beginning of each school year, all students are given updated copies of the student handbook, which contains the code. In an effort to ensure a positive and supportive culture, the Positive School Climate Committee was created in the spring of 2013. During the 2013-2014 school year, the committee administered an in-house student survey to determine students’ feelings about the climate of Staples High School and to seek suggestions for improvement. Based on student feedback, a reference guide was created to provide ideas to teaching staff to make their classroom environment more friendly and inviting. The Resilience Project, “Cards of Kindness”, “Fifteen Minutes of Fame”, and “Ally Recognition Event” are examples of the many programs, clubs and initiatives implemented at SHS to support a positive, supportive, and safe school climate. The Endicott survey results indicate that approximately 92 percent of the students feel safe at school, and nearly 83 percent of the students responded that they are proud of their school. During interviews, students reported that their teachers care about their learning and take an interest in them. A variety of methods are used to recognize student accomplishments and to instill pride in the student body. Three times per week, the schedule allows 15 minutes for communication time. During this time, the student-produced television show is broadcast school-wide. The show addresses topics of interest and highlights student involvement

within the school community. In addition, students who embody the school's values are recognized through the Student of the Month award. School counselors, working with the local chapter of the Rotary Club, nominate students who have contributed exemplary service to the community for "Rotary Student of the Month." Finally, in the second semester, students who have significantly raised their grades are nominated by school counselors for the Most Improved award. A breakfast in their honor is organized and their parents and teachers are invited to attend. As a result of the numerous programs, activities, and initiatives, students at Staples High School participate in a safe, positive, respectful and supportive culture that fosters high expectations, school pride, shared ownership and student responsibility for learning. (classroom observations, facility tour, teacher interviews, students, department leaders, school leadership, panel presentation, school board, Endicott survey, self-study, school support staff, parents, teachers)

The school strives to be equitable and inclusive, ensuring access to challenging academic experiences for all students, making certain that courses throughout the curriculum are populated with students reflecting the diversity of the student body, fostering heterogeneity, and supporting the achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. As a graduation requirement, all students at Staples High School must take an area studies course in social studies at the "A" level, which is advanced college preparatory. This heterogeneously grouped class occurs within the social studies department and students have a choice from among six different courses which they can take during their sophomore or junior year. Staples High School attempts to create elective classes that will inspire their students and will enroll students of all abilities. Eighty-seven percent of students feel that they have opportunities to take courses in which students of varying abilities are enrolled. Also according to the Endicott survey, students have numerous opportunities to be in classes that reflect the diversity of learning abilities and the school. Teachers make course recommendations for course prerequisites, but a process allows parents and students to override that recommendation so that students can challenge themselves where they may have a special interest or motivation. As a result of the core requirement and

the extensive elective offerings, students at Staples High School have numerous opportunities to access challenging academic classes that also reflect the diversity of the student body. (self-study, Endicott survey, parents, students, school support staff, teachers, school leadership)

Staples has a limited, formal, ongoing program(s) or process 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. According to the Endicott survey, 34.2 percent of students, 48.6 percent of staff, and 31 percent of parents report that the school has a program which provides the student with an adult in the school, in addition to the guidance counselor, with whom students meet regularly and who knows them well. In an attempt to ensure personalization, each of the four assistant principals is assigned a specific grade, which he or she follows for the four years that the students are at Staples. The assistant principals are committed to knowing each student and to communicating that they are available for much more than disciplinary issues. During the school year, the assistant principals meet with small groups of students, at least twice, to discuss a variety of issues. Administrators stated that in the 2015-2016 school year, a committee will be formed to consider scheduling, timing, and curriculum issues related to adding an advisory program. Development of an advisory program is part of the school's two- and five-year plans. The intent of the advisory program will be to ensure that every student at Staples has an adult who he or she sees on a consistent basis to assist with his or her achievement of 21st century skills. Thus, when the school creates an advisory program or process, it will ensure a more extensive formal process for all students to have an adult in the building who can assist students in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (Endicott survey, self-study, school support staff, students, school leadership, parents, teachers)

In order to improve student learning through professional development, the principal and professional staff at SHS engage in professional discourse, access resources outside of the school, dedicate formal time to implement professional development, and apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The district provides six professional

development days for teachers as part of the school calendar each year. Recently, these days have supported district and school initiatives and state mandates including Common Core State Standards, Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, and teacher evaluation. According to the Endicott survey, 56 percent of teachers feel that the school's professional development programs enable them to acquire and use skills to improve instruction and assessment. In general, teachers do not have much input into the identification of professional development topics and workshops. Additionally, teachers have limited opportunities to collaborate both within their own department and across disciplines. A professional development workshop model, a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) session provided options for teachers based upon individual need and interest with time to practice and develop learned skills. In addition, a new professional development and evaluation committee was created. The committee provides some opportunities for teacher input in topics for future professional development sessions. Full-faculty meetings are held four to five times per year. Teachers occasionally volunteer to present lessons with the intent of sharing new ideas to enhance classroom experiences. Once per month at department meetings, staff and their respective department chairs share methods for implementing ideas garnered at professional development sessions that can then be used for that particular discipline. In addition, departments also collaborate to discuss common issues related to teaching and learning. Staples staff attempt, within the constraints of the school schedule, to share and apply skills, and practice ideas gained. Teachers often engage one another informally in reflective conversations about teaching and learning, meet to discuss ideas, share lessons and obtain advice on their own time during planning periods, lunch, and before and after school. As a result of a culture of informal professional discourse for reflection, inquiry, and analysis of teaching and learning, teachers have the opportunity to broadly apply the skills, practices, and ideas gained to improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment. (teacher interviews, department leaders, school leadership, school board, Endicott survey, self-study, teachers)

School leaders regularly use research-based evaluation and supervision processes that focus upon improved student learning. The current evaluation system was researched, implemented, and required by

the state. Staff and administrators alike have experienced some frustration with the complexity and lack of user friendliness in Protraxx. Many faculty members indicated that although the new system has flaws, the evaluation rubric and materials are beneficial to improving instruction. Thus, the use of the research-based evaluation and supervision processes helps the staff to ensure that students are achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, school leadership)

The organization of time supports research-based instruction and the learning needs of all students; however, the current schedule has limited formal collaboration time. The school schedule rotates on a five-day cycle so that classes meet at various times each day. It serves several purposes including longer class periods that allow for the implementation of research-based instructional practices including inquiry-based teaching, cooperative group work and extended lab periods. A 15-minute communication block takes place three times each week to offer the opportunity for school community members to view a student-produced television show, to listen to school information and announcements, and to engage faculty in informal conversations with students about civic and social responsibility. While the current school schedule has many strengths, its rotating nature does not easily facilitate students leaving school for work experiences, internships, or other alternative education programs. Each week, teachers have four duty periods and at least eight preparation periods. Efforts are made to match preparation and duty periods for teachers and to link the duty periods of special education teachers with academic teachers to promote collaboration. The school schedule makes it difficult to provide formal collaboration time for all teachers. Therefore, while the organization of time supports research-based instruction, formal collaborative opportunities for teachers will support and enhance teaching further meeting the learning needs of all students. (teacher interviews, department leaders, school leadership, panel presentation, self-study, teachers)

Student load and class size enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students. Teacher course loads are designed to ensure sufficient personalization and individual attention to student needs. No classes have more than 30 students, with the exception of physical education and music. Core

academic areas are scheduled with the intention of maximum class sizes of 25 and most do so. The average class size by department are English, 21.77; math, 19.93; social studies, 22.55; science, 18.82; world languages, 17.47; media, 18.38; art, 14.21; academic support, 7.36; family and consumer sciences, 15.52; technology education, 14.33; and theater, 15. According to the Endicott survey, about 88 percent of students and 73 percent of parents agree that class sizes in their courses are reasonable. To also support student learning, English teachers teach four classes, as opposed to five taught by teachers in other core academic areas. Science teachers also teach four classes to facilitate set-up and teaching of labs. Thus, the student load and class size allow for individualized instruction to help students achieve the school's core values, beliefs, and the 21st century learning skills. (self-study, school leadership, teachers, parents, students)

The principal works with building leaders to provide instructional leadership rooted in the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal at Staples High School consistently communicates messages that reflect the core values of the school community. These values are student-centered focusing upon inclusiveness and caring for individual differences. The values are academically centered and are focused upon the importance of an excellent rigorous college preparatory education for all students. In the Endicott survey, almost 84 percent of students agree that the principal is clear about what he wants the school to accomplish, and over 75 percent of staff agrees that the principal and other school-based administrators provide instructional leadership that is consistent with the school's core values, beliefs, and learning expectations. The principal works together with school leaders to implement changes in curriculum, staffing, and budget. The 33-member Collaborative Team (CT) meets weekly to examine and to discuss issues within the school. The members of the CT include the principal, assistant principals, department chairs, a faculty member from each department, the faculty advisor and two students from Student Assembly, and the two co-chairs of the Staples High School parent-teacher association (PTA). For example, new classes might be proposed at these meetings. Discussion, debate, and investigation focus upon how the proposals might best serve the

school's mission. The principal also provides instructional leadership that reflects the school's core values by encouraging all students to succeed. He uses every opportunity to celebrate student accomplishments: academic, extracurricular, and personal. For example, the principal instituted a Most Improved Student award given annually to students nominated by their counselors, specifically for improving their grades and grade point average (GPA). Thus, the principal, working with other building leaders, provides leadership that promotes the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, school leadership, students, parents, teachers, school board, central office personnel)

Meaningful and defined roles in the decision-making process that promote responsibility and ownership at SHS occur often through the involvement of teachers, parents, and students. Parents, teachers, and students serve as members on the Collaborative Team that makes decisions regarding important school issues. At these meetings, questions, concerns, and initiatives are discussed, and the principal makes decisions on important school issues based upon feedback and input gained from the CT. Staples High School has also created a Positive School Climate Committee that has helped address the social and civic climate of the school. Students, teachers, counselors, and the principal serve as members on this committee. Based upon feedback from students, the Positive Climate Committee has instituted a number of initiatives to support ongoing efforts for school improvement. Students participate in a variety of leadership roles including the student leadership committee, student council, National Honor Society, and various other student groups and clubs. Students who have an idea for a club can propose it. The new club will be implemented when 15 signatures of interested students are obtained. Students take an active role in writing and publishing the school newspaper, *Inklings*, as well as the school television broadcast to share a student perspective on school happenings, issues, and activities. The principal encourages parental involvement by conducting monthly morning coffee meetings to discuss important topics and share school information. The PTA also sends out newsletters each month to enhance communication and encourage parent involvement. In addition, the principal and

superintendent communicate directly with parents through the ConnectEd calling system to share information of importance. Teachers are involved in decision-making through a variety of ways. They serve on curriculum writing teams, offer professional development sessions, make budget requests, and often propose new course offerings. Therefore, the meaningful participation of teachers, parents, and students in the school's decision-making process promotes responsibility and ownership and encourages all stakeholders in the school community to play an active role in supporting the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers, parents, students, department leaders, school leadership, school board, central office personnel)

Teachers at Staples High School frequently exercise initiative and leadership for the improvement of the school and to increase students' engagement in learning. The teachers have many roles in being a part of the decision-making at Staples High School. They take an active role in the Collaborative Team, the newly created professional development committee, and in their academic departments. Teachers take a leadership by proposing new courses. Teachers make a grass roots contribution in the budget process. They informally and formally meet to develop, revise, and implement curriculum and instructional strategies. They address student needs with the Resiliency Project. The faculty supported the Resilience Project's proposal for a homework-free weekend over Thanksgiving break. Recently, teachers created a professional development program in which they became the trainers and modeled new technology for fellow faculty members. In addition, teachers at Staples High School are regularly available to their students outside of the classroom to meet with students both before and after school to support their learning. Thus, the teachers at Staples High School have made a strong impact upon the teaching and learning process through their combined efforts to exercise initiative and leadership essential to the improvement of the school and to increase student engagement both inside and outside of the classroom. (teachers, self-study, department leaders, school leadership, students, parents, central office personnel, school board)

The school board, superintendent, and principal are collaborative and constructive in achieving

the school's 21st century learning expectations and to a lesser degree reflective. The principal and superintendent meet frequently to discuss how to best implement the school's 21st century learning expectations to support the teaching and learning process at SHS. The board of education, superintendent, and principal are committed to the Westport 2025 Student Lens initiative. The Westport 2025 initiative is a major example of how administrators and teachers collaborate, with the assistance of Teachers College, to provide a common vision of the critical skills students need to be successful in the 21st century. The Westport 2025 Student Lens identifies four major 21st century skills including critical thinking, creative thinking, global thinking and communication capacities. Members of the board of education indicated strong support for the 2025 initiative as a district-wide focus to enhance student learning. They also support the future development of the fifth domain focused upon the identification of critical social and emotional skills for the 21st century learner. Administrators are encouraging teachers to integrate the Lens into their lesson expectations. The school community indicates that it is in the early stages of integrating the identified 21st century skills and learning expectations throughout the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As a result of the collaborative relationship established with the school board, superintendent, and principal, the school has begun the process to implement fully its 21st century learning expectations. (classroom observations, teacher interviews, students, department leaders, school leadership, school board, self-study, school support staff)

The board of education and superintendent provide the principal with ample decision-making authority to lead the school. The principal's job description outlines responsibilities that include maintaining an effective climate, providing instructional leadership, assuming responsibility for the implementation and observance of all board policies, and maintains active relationships with students and parents. The principal is responsible for supervision and evaluation of all staff. According to the Endicott survey, 63 percent of Staples staff and almost 88 percent of parents agree that the board of education and superintendent provide the principal with sufficient decision-making authority to lead the school. The board of education and the superintendent have confidence in the principal's ability to

successfully manage the school and have routinely supported new budgets requests aligned with additional course requests, clubs, programs, and sections of various classes when enrollment supported a need. Therefore, the principal's autonomy and authority allow him to have sufficient decision-making authority and to move the school in the direction of the school's mission and 21st century learning expectations. (teacher interviews, students, school leadership, panel presentation, school board, Endicott survey, self-study, parents, teachers)

Commendations

1. The school community's positive learning environment that ensures high expectations for learning in a safe, respectful, and supportive climate that fosters ownership and pride
2. The student code of conduct that clearly outlines school rules and student expectations
3. The creation of various committees that involve parents, students, and teachers in the decision-making process
4. The establishment and implementation of a wide variety of methods to recognize and celebrate student accomplishments
5. The wide variety of course offerings that allows students opportunities to access heterogeneous classes
6. The evaluation system that is beneficial to improving instruction and student learning
7. The student load and class size that enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students
8. The ongoing collaboration between the principal and the other building leaders that is constructive in achieving the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
9. The professional staff's ability to create and implement new courses based upon their students' needs and interests

Recommendations

1. Investigate and provide ways to support more formalized collaboration among faculty
2. Create professional development opportunities for teachers that provide regular teacher input in the identification of the topics
3. Develop and implement the proposed plan for a formal advisory program or process



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

Staples High 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. Each student is assigned an individual guidance counselor and assistant principal who work with him/her throughout high school. The comprehensive support services have developed program and intervention strategies needed to help students succeed. For example, the Bridge Program specifically targets at-risk ninth grade students before they struggle academically or socially at their new school. Bridge brings together committed middle and high school staff, engaged and involved parents, a targeted study skills curriculum, and a well-equipped Bridge room to improve student performance and to help new students make their transition to the high school successful. The academic support department boasts an appropriate range of services beyond the Bridge Program, offering support courses including Intensive Reading and Writing, Personalized Study Skills, and Writing Workshop to students in grades 9-12 who have been recommended through the student study team (SST)/Response to Intervention (RTI) process which is responsible for the identification and placement of at-risk students in academic support classes. Any faculty member who has a concern about a student may make a referral to the SST. As the year progresses, sometimes a delay in the timeliness of case reviews occurs due to an increased number of referrals. Staples High School has a number of established interventions and support personnel for social/emotional needs. For example, counselors, psychologists, and social workers provide services and referrals when needed for students with personal difficulties, including drug-related issues, and suicidal or homicidal ideation. In addition, the Resilience Project was created as a response to an apparent rise in student stress and anxiety related to academic and social pressures; the purpose is to help students develop a repertoire of coping strategies, which will in turn assist them in stress management, positive self-image, and mindfulness. Additionally, the school has implemented a Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) program in collaboration with an outside agency to assist students and parents with growing concerns. The school nursing staff provides direct

intervention services that include physical assessment of injuries and mental health referrals as needed. As a result of the school's timely, coordinated, and directive intervention strategies for all students, the school is able to support each student's achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, teachers, school support staff, parents, students, school leadership, school board)

Staples High School provides information to families, especially to those most in need, about available student support services. The school has several web-based systems in place for communicating with parents and students including Naviance, ESchool, EdConnect, and Facebook. The school's main website offers a rich array of information including calendars for meetings, forums, routine events, and principal and guidance-sponsored events, which are openly available to the community. The website also offers links to town and county human services departments, providing additional support for students and families. Additionally, the school uses many mailing lists to disseminate information: class-specific parent lists to keep families abreast of matters pertaining specifically to their grade, a parent- teacher association (PTA) mailing list to advertise important school-wide dates and functions, and the Open Choice mailing list to connect the school to Bridgeport families regarding school activities. Staples hosts numerous forums for families that are grade-specific; these may address the college admissions process, financial aid questions, student developmental needs, and many other issues. In some forums, parents can meet and communicate with the principal, while others are hosted and sponsored by entities such as the school psychologists and the guidance department. The school also hosts several evening informational sessions such as Back to School Night, Curriculum and Advanced Placement Courses Night, Eighth Grade Special Education Transition Night, Eighth Grade Parent Night, Junior Parent Night, Financial Aid Night, and grade-level parent coffees. The ongoing relationship between students and their guidance counselors also supports student knowledge of services, and affords immediate, personal access to adults for students in need. The health office provides information and support frequently sought out by teens and their families. Therefore,

information about available student support services is provided to all families, especially to those most in need. (parents, students, teachers, school board, self-study, school support staff, school leadership)

Support services staff uses technology to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. The eSchool system is used by administration, guidance and pupil personnel services (PPS), nurses, special education teachers, academic support teachers, and regular education teachers to manage student-related information; staff rely heavily upon this comprehensive program for tracking student academic performance, attendance records, schedules, contact information, state test scores, and demographics, thus granting counselors, nurses, and other staff easy access to vital information. Also, eSchool allows teachers to maintain open, online grade books, providing accurate and timely reflections of academic progress whenever a snapshot of a particular student's standing is needed. All teachers use Schoology to coordinate communication about assignments to students, parents, and special education teachers. Equally important to the bridging process is the school's full-featured voicemail system and the adoption of Google Apps for Education, a suite of applications designed to promote easy communication and collaboration among students, parents, staff, and administration. Beyond these school-wide technological adoptions, each department also has its own range of tools at its disposal. Guidance uses Naviance, a tool designed to facilitate college and career planning and the recommendation process. Guidance counselors also uses a Facebook page for the purpose of communicating public information to a large group of parents at once, and an internal network drive through which counselors can share mental health resources and related protocols, increasing the ease with which the appropriate staff may access such materials. Meanwhile, the health office also uses the School Nurse Assistant Program (SNAP), a comprehensive tracking program that allows for the documentation of all office visits, communication exchanges, and nursing notes; reports are generated from this database to monitor the effectiveness of medication plans and the frequency of particular complaints or injuries. Student support personnel use IEP Direct to assist with the development and management of individualized education plans for students receiving special education services. School

psychologists use Pearson Psych’s Q-Global and PARiConnect, both of which aid in the administration and analysis of psychological assessments for in-need students. As a result of the broad range of technology, support services staff is able to deliver an effective range of coordinated services for each student. (self-study, parents, teachers, school board, department leaders, school support staff, school leadership)

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 relevant personal, academic, career, and college counseling, engage in individual and group meetings with all students, and deliver collaborative outreach and referral to community resources. However, the use of ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school’s 21st century learning expectation is limited at this time. The Endicott survey reveals that 70.7 percent of students state that they feel comfortable in going to the guidance counselor’s office, and 79.3 percent of parents believe Staples has “an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff.” Eleven school counselors serve the approximately 1,900 students at Staples High School. In addition, four full-time psychologists, one full-time social worker, and two part-time social workers offer services for all students. The part-time social workers are assigned to work one day per week at each of the district’s middle schools with the intent to provide consistency of service when the identified students transition from grade 8 to grade 9. Four full-time and one part-time administrative assistant serve the professional staff. In addition, the college and career center (CCC) is staffed by one full-time and one part-time paraprofessional. In order to deliver the written developmental program, counselors meet with all students at least twice per year, once individually for scheduling and once in a group setting. All students may also schedule additional appointments with their counselor. In addition, counselors see all students in small groups for grade-level meetings and classroom presentations, as well as in family meetings. The CCC is one important setting where students have access to career and college preparation resources, college representative

visits, workshops, and job-related services. All members of pupil services are involved in the process of referral to community, area mental health agencies, and social service providers. The pupil services staff fosters relationships with local social service agencies, including the Westport Departments of Human Services, Children and Families, Developmental Services, and Positive Youth Development. The school psychologists also host parent coffees, presented in cooperation with Positive Youth Development, during which they discuss the developmental issues that teenagers experience. Staples High School regularly surveys parents to improve services. For example, the guidance department distributes post-presentation surveys to parents and incorporates feedback into improving future presentations. However, the counseling department lacks a formal plan of data collection and analysis. As a result, the comprehensive counseling services are adequately staffed to provide appropriate services, and when a more formal data collection and evaluation process is implemented, the school can better ensure that each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, school support staff, parents, school board, school leadership)

Health services have an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention, use an appropriate referral process, conduct ongoing student health assessments, and use ongoing, relevant assessment data to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. According to the Endicott survey, the vast majority of students, staff, and parents, 80.5 to 95 percent, feel comfortable going to the school nurse. Furthermore, 76.8 percent of staff agrees that health services personnel effectively provide preventative health and direct intervention services. The school is staffed by three full-time registered nurses and one full-time health assistant. Monthly district nursing staff meetings are held to share relevant information and provide feedback to maintain consistent practice across all grade levels. Staff meetings allow time to evaluate current practice, review feedback, and evaluate district health office procedures to improve services and ensure each student is physically able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. The district nursing supervisor is responsible for the yearly evaluation

with input yielded from direct observation and with collaborative reported observations from the principal and assistant principals. The nurses are involved in ongoing student health assessments, developing individualized health care plans (IHCPs), emergency care plans (ECPs), and transportation care plans (TCPs) in order to prepare for whatever eventualities may befall students as needs arise. The nursing staff also provides health education, staff training, emotional support for students and family, formal and informal mental health counseling for students, and the appropriate referrals to professionals in or out of school, as needed. Further responsibilities include state-mandated immunization compliance, mandated vision and postural screenings, and physical examination requirements for school admission, attendance, and participation in athletics. Data collected from SNAP are shared with the nursing supervisor to assist in staffing needs and to address areas of quality assurance and assess possible trends. Friday morning meetings are in place and are attended by the principal, administrative staff, and nurse to discuss health office activities, analyze potential trends, and collaborate on possible changes in the delivery of services and student outcomes. Due to the adequate health services staff who provide preventative health services and direct intervention services, use an appropriate referral process, conduct ongoing health assessments, and use ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community to improve services, the school is able to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, school support staff, parents, teachers, school leadership, classroom observations)

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, ensure that the facility is available and staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school; however, the use of ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the school community in order to assess and improve resources and services to ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations is limited at this time. According to the

Endicott survey, 93 percent of students agree the library is available to them before, during, and after school. Of the students surveyed, 91 percent agrees the library/media center provides them with a wide range of materials, technology, and other informational resources. Using data from the climate survey, the space in the library/media center was reconfigured and three distinct spaces were identified to meet the student needs. Teachers have significant involvement in making decisions about selection of materials for the library/media center, ensuring the available resources to meet their curricular and instructional needs. In addition to providing resources, library/media personnel also instruct both students and teachers alike as to how to most effectively use these resources. Library/ media services personnel are regularly involved in collaborative team meetings as well as relevant department meetings to ensure that the print and digital collections are aligned to curricular needs. School librarians participate in evaluating and revising curriculum. For example, the information and technology curriculum was reworked district-wide several years ago, with input from other district information technology and Information Technology Literacy (ITL) staff and Staples library/media specialists. Each lesson taught in the library/media center, also called the library learning common (LLC) is a result of collaborative planning between classroom teachers and the library/media specialists to ensure that the ITL curriculum is being taught in conjunction with the various department curricula. Library/media services staff, the district, and school leadership understand the need for a well-equipped library/media collection and provide an adequate yearly budget to accommodate the maintenance and purchase of materials. The school's library/media center provides a wide range of resources to support the school curriculum. The library/media center contains nearly 22,000 print volumes. Students and staff also have access to over 130 eBooks and over 260 audiobooks in either digital or compact disc (CD) format. The collection also contains nearly 1,400 videos, in addition to a subscription of a video streaming database. Currently, 68 magazine subscriptions and 7 newspaper subscriptions are available for use by students and staff. The library/media center's website facilitates access to web-based resources and databases, including 14 subscription databases for social studies, 3 science and health databases, 1 literature

database, 2 online encyclopedias, and 2 databases of academic journals. In addition, there are database resources available at the Westport Public Library and those provided by Connecticut through iCONN, the Connecticut Digital Library. In addition to the school's Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative, the students have access to, and support in, all areas of technology including 4 laptop carts, 13 desktop iMacs, and 29 Windows-based desktop computers, along with a sufficient number of printers.

Technologically savvy students and teachers staff the Tech Help Desk most periods. Also available are cameras and other technology tools to aid in accessing information and developing and presenting student work. The library has sufficient space for multiple activities to occur simultaneously, including three distinct zones, two classrooms, separated by a movable wall, to accommodate larger groups when needed. The library is open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., extending into both before- and after-school hours. During exams, it provides extended hours from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Library/media services personnel consist of two certified library/media specialists, three experienced full-time library paraprofessionals, and parent volunteers. All freshmen go through a library orientation, during which they learn about the library schedule and resources and are introduced to and learn how to utilize their ePortfolios. The library/media center has proven itself highly responsive to student interests and needs in order to support student learning, including hosting authors, community speakers, and workshops. Data from the school climate survey and the Tools for Real-Time Assessment of Information Literacy Skills (TRAILS) are used to inform library practice and curriculum. While the integration of ITL resources and skills and the provision of a wide range of materials and technologies helps Staples High School meet the curricular needs of the school, the use of ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the community to improve resources and services will further ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, students, school leadership, department leaders, parents, facility tour, classroom observations)

Support services for identified students, including special education, Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and English language learners have an adequate number of

certified/licensed personnel and support staff who collaborate with all teachers, counselors, and targeted services and other support staff and provide inclusive learning opportunities for all students. However, performing ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community in order to improve resources and services to further ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations has yet to begin. According to the Endicott survey, 77.3 percent of parents agree that the "support services program has an adequate number of certified/licensed personnel and support staff for identified learners, including special education, 504, and English language learners." Staples High School has 1 special education chair, 17 special education teachers, 4 school psychologists, 3 social workers, 1 transition specialist, 1.4 speech and language specialists, 1 part-time physical therapist, 1 part-time occupational therapist, 1.5 special education secretaries, 1 reading specialist, 15 paraprofessionals, and a 0.2 English language learner (ELL) teacher. This staff services approximately 208 special education students, 101 students with 504 plans, and 7 English language learners. Students with a 504 plan are monitored by the appropriate school counselor in collaboration with the appropriate school psychologist and social worker when necessary. ELL students are monitored by the ELL program coordinator. The ELL teacher continually communicates with the students' classroom teachers and guidance counselors and supports both the students and teachers. The students' English language progress is formally assessed annually through the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) Links state-mandated year-end test. The special education staff services 11 co-taught classes with a mix of general and special education students. There are 14 resource teachers who deliver special education services through a study skills class. Study skills teachers provide specialized instruction individualized according to the student's Individual Education Program (IEP). The study skills teacher also works with regular education teachers to assist them in implementing IEP goals and objectives. Special education teachers are also responsible for monitoring students in their caseload, approximately 15 students per teacher. The process of monitoring student progress is practiced on a regular basis among general education teacher, special education teacher, and parents. Students identified under special education are

supported by a team of personnel including a special education case manager, counselor, social worker, school psychologist, and grade-level assistant principal. These teams communicate and collaborate on a regular basis to share information and monitor student progress. Additionally, the district has a list of professionals who can provide further consultation upon request to the high school team. This list includes a psychiatrist, a neuropsychologist, a board-certified behavior analyst, and an assistive technology expert. Feedback from parents is actively sought in order to inform procedures and to ensure needs are met; a questionnaire is given to parents prior to planning and placement team (PPT) meetings to solicit their perspectives on their experiences as participants in the meetings, their understanding of decisions made for their children, and their satisfaction with the individualized programs provided for their children. Three study skills programs also offer a component called "Relationships." This class is designed to provide additional support around emotional and behavioral issues for students who require it. This class provides a small group setting in which students participate in peer group counseling, co-facilitated by a special education teacher, a social worker, and school psychologist. The goal of this class is to develop problem-solving strategies to improve relationships with peers and adults as well as to develop problem-solving strategies and skills to address issues regarding school-related matters. An intensive resource program provides students identified with significant, multiple disabilities the opportunities to be involved in their school and in the Westport community as they develop core skills needed to successfully transition to adult life with support through adult agencies. The students have school-based vocational internships in the school library, school store and dry-cleaning store, as well as community-based job sites at the Westport Nature Center, Westport Town Library, and local retail operations. They take weekly trips to various community settings, are involved in the Best Buddies club, participate in Unified Sports, and take part in other school clubs and activities. In addition to the transition services provided through the guidance department, students who receive special education services participate in workshops and seminars provided by the transition coordinator as part of their transition planning. In the event that the planning and placement team identifies goals beyond the

completion of the student's four-year academic requirements, there are several options for placement in programs located on nearby college campuses. Although the adequate personnel and support staff provide a broad scope of specialized support services currently available for identified students, performing ongoing assessment, using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, in order to assess and improve resources and services will further ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, teachers, parents, school support staff, school board, school leadership, classroom observations, facility tour)

Commendations

1. The broad spectrum of coordinated and directive intervention strategies to support all students, including identified and at-risk students
2. The multiple methods of disseminating information to ensure that those families most in need have access to available support services
3. The use of a wide range of technology to deliver coordinated service programs
4. The delivery of a comprehensive program of counseling services to meet the needs of students and parents
5. The personal, academic, career, and college counseling provided to students
6. The health services' delivery of preventative health and direct intervention services
7. The use of ongoing, relevant data, including feedback from the school community by health services, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations
8. The active engagement of the library/media staff in the implementation of the school's curriculum
9. The provision of a wide range of materials, technologies, and services in the library/media center that support the school's curriculum and student and staff personal interests
10. The availability of the library/media facility, which is staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school
11. The collaboration of support services and teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a method for the use of ongoing, relevant assessment data, including feedback from the community to improve resources and services provided by counseling services
2. Develop and implement a method for conducting ongoing assessment using relevant, including feedback from the school community, to improve resources and services provided by library media services
3. Develop and implement a method for performing ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, in order to improve resources and services provided by special education services



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 Westport community and district's governing body provide exemplary 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 and sufficient instructional materials and supplies. The board of education maintains a constructive working relationship with the town governing bodies. Budgetary proposals from the board of education and the superintendent have been fully funded for the past four years and have offered sufficient funding to support the full range of academic, music, theater, art, and athletic programs. The town values education and is willing to pay for it. The Westport Public School District is committed to professional development and curricular revision. During a typical school year, all teachers attend six professional development days. The district funds summer work for teachers who write and refine curriculum and work on related projects. Money for technology in the district is funded through three separate line items in the budget: computer software, technology supplies, and instructional technology, which cover the hardware purchases, like laptops, desktops, SMART Boards, and projectors. In addition to these school department budgetary allotments, a significant amount of financial support directly from the community in the form of fundraising and donations provides financial support for student enrichment opportunities, scholarships, and recognition awards. Tremendous financial support from the community is also evident in the athletic fields at Staples High School. Due to the adequate, dependable funding of the community and the Westport School District for Staples High School, students' educational needs are supported so they are able to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, panel presentation, school board, central office personnel, school leadership, parents, teachers)

Staples High School develops, plans, and funds excellent programs that ensure maintenance and repair of the building and school plant, properly maintain, catalogue and replace equipment, and keep the school clean on a daily basis. Resources in the form of financial support, planning, personnel, supplies, supervision, and coordination are sufficient and effectively implemented to assure that the

building is clean and in good repair. There are 18 custodial and maintenance staff members employed by the school. Each custodian has designated responsibilities that assure the thorough cleaning of the building and other related tasks such as making deliveries and noting repair needs. The custodial staff is well trained and supervised so their efforts are efficient and effective. The principal and the building and grounds supervisor assess the condition and upkeep of the facility weekly to assure timely attention to needs. Consistency between projected expenses for maintenance and facilities line items and the final adopted budget line items shows careful and effective planning. The Westport Parks and Recreation Department maintains all athletic fields, and a landscape company maintains school grounds under a subcontract. The district operating budget contained line items for materials for repair of instructional and non-instructional equipment, high school building and grounds maintenance, additional building and grounds improvement projects and restorative/preventative maintenance items for the high school. Educational equipment is adequately available and in good repair. District technology is catalogued and managed by designated personnel, with most items valued at \$250 or more stamped with bar codes. Textbooks are also managed with a barcode system and designated personnel are in charge of organization, ordering, and replacement. The physical education and athletic facilities are outstanding and have been well maintained with the exception of the boys' locker room in the physical education area and the boys' and girls' locker rooms in the pool area, which are in need of renovation. Staples High School 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 are well planned and funded providing the students a clean, well-maintained building that fully supports student learning. (self-study, facility tour, teacher interviews, school board, school support staff, school leadership, parents, students, teachers)

The Westport community and Staples High School implement an exemplary long-range plan that addresses programs and services, enrollment changes and staffing needs, facility needs and technology and capital improvements. Systematic planning for future needs is a standard practice for the Westport

School District. The district maintains a five-year capital plan and a five-year technology plan. There is also a long-range initiative timeline. The board of education's goals, objectives, and action plan represent a concise view of how the high school should be structured via its programs and services. Part of this plan involves a comprehensive vision of the manner in which technology will influence and define education in the future and promotes rigorous core academic subjects while addressing the needs of the ever-changing global community. The community has demonstrated its commitment to academic and physical expansion, as per the district's long-range plan, by implementing a new science engineering course, by dedicating a media center room for robotics, by allocating a shared computer lab to the relatively new computer-programming course sequence, by reallocating space for the social studies learning center, and by instituting new Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The board of education anticipates staffing needs based upon enrollment and is committed to offering new courses, including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses such as Engineering and Applied Physics, Environmental Science Problem Solving, and multiple computer science courses, in order to engage students and foster academic excellence. The five-year capital plan forecasts items in the budget, which address such issues as locker room renovations, roof repairs, and floor resurfacing. The locker room renovation and the space needed for new course offerings are still under study. The board of education approved and the school has implemented a Bring Your Own Device model for the integration of technology into the school. This program has been highly successful to date and is supported by the additional availability of devices such as Chromebooks in every classroom. The district regularly conducts a staffing analysis and an examination of student enrollment patterns. Both help to determine needs for the proposed budget. Each year there is an evaluation of the short and long-term impacts of changes in enrollment, including the use of space and class size guidelines. Thus, the Westport community funds and implements long-range plans that address programs, services, and facility needs to meet the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, facility tour, teacher interviews, school board, school leadership, central office personnel, teachers, parents, school support staff)

By design, the faculty and building administrators of Staples High School are actively involved in the development and implementation of the budget. The process for budget requests begins with the teachers making equipment and supply requests to their department chairs. Department chairs submit these requests to the principal. These requests are made early in the school year for the next year's budget. The time from request to budget approval is lengthy and goes through many revisions. The principal assembles the school budget that is then presented to the superintendent. Once the school district's budget is finalized and approved by the board of education and the town, the budget is implemented by the school through the principal, department heads, and staff. As a result, the school faculty and building administrators are actively involved in developing and implementing the school's budget to implement the 21st century learning expectations. (teacher interviews, department leaders, school support staff, school leadership, teachers, central office personnel, school board, parents)

The school site and plant support the delivery of high quality school programs and services in most areas. In the Endicott survey, students, staff and parents indicate that the cafeteria, guidance suite, and health office suite support the delivery of high quality programs and services. The physical space for the guidance department is attractive with a large waiting room and individual offices of adequate size. Food services at Staples High School is operated by an outside vendor and held accountable to all local fire department codes and the guidelines of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The approximately 3,000 square foot space dedicated to the health office suite has proven to be adequate and well designed to meet students' health needs. Classroom space also provides for two culinary kitchens with an adjoining room for culinary service, a wood shop, a preschool with an outdoor playground, TV studio, theater, blackbox theater, and special art rooms that allow for the delivery of high quality programs and services. Physical education space is extensive. The boys' physical education locker room, and both the boys' and girls' pool locker rooms are old facilities and in need of renovation. As a result, ensuring all facets of the school site and plant are compliant, will support the delivery of high quality

school programs and services. (self-study, department leaders, Endicott survey, facility tour, teacher interviews, central office personnel, school leadership, teachers, students, parents)

The school always 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. Any deficiencies related to code violations are resolved via work orders through the School Dude software system and are completed in a timely manner. Throughout the summer and school year, the fire department conducts routine inspections, which are to identify any problems pertaining to code violations, deficiencies, or any problems that might not be identified by staff. Due to the recent construction and renovation, code and legal violations in the physical plant are rare. The board of education is committed to maintaining high security standards at Staples High School and in the district in general. This is evident through a complete security audit of all the schools in the district. Installation of a protective film on all ground level windows adds additional security in making those windows bulletproof. Now all classroom and exterior doors require a key for entry and therefore add an additional layer of security for students and staff. Another commitment of the district to ensure a safe environment is easily seen in the upgrade of all interior and exterior grounds and facility security cameras and two-way radios. As a result, Staples High 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, providing a safe, secure environment. (self-study, facility tour, teachers, school board, department leaders, central office personnel, school leadership)

The professional staff at Staples High School makes extensive efforts to engage parents and families as partners in their children's education and have programs and resources in place to reach out to those parents who may feel less connected to the school. The school's email system allows for communication among teachers, students, and parents. The school's record keeping software, eSchool, enables teachers to post to a live gradebook for student and parent viewing, thereby communicating the results of all assignments in a timely manner. An additional and separate online, content management

system, Schoology, allows classroom teachers to post assignments and files for students and parents. Specific departments at Staples High School also host events specifically intended to reach out to parent groups. For example, the special education department holds a parent information night for new students, which focuses on curriculum and involvement in the Staples' community, and the guidance department holds grade level information sessions for parents. The school has a parent-teacher association (PTA) with 923 members with the presidents serving as members on the school's Collaborative Team in order to help lead decision-making in the school. Staples High School holds two back-to-school nights in the fall, one for freshman and sophomore parents and one for junior and senior parents, as well as one curriculum night in the spring semester which includes an overview of all academic programs at the high school for incoming freshman parents combined with an overview of Advanced Placement (AP) courses for parents of upper class students. Families of the students in the Open Choice program are welcomed into the Staples community with numerous supports, including ongoing parent meetings held in Bridgeport to provide important information, as well as dedicated social work time to provide these supports to parents. In addition, a "buddy program" matches Bridgeport Staples parents with Westport Staples parents to help them become comfortable within the Staples community. The school psychologists also hold positive youth development workshops for parents where prominent speakers are brought in and present on topics of interest to parents. The Westport Department of Human Services also provides such resources as financial assistance for school programs, camperships, proms, etc., as well as provides more general help regarding fuel assistance and emergency help to parents. As a result, the staff at Staples is able to engage parents and families as partners in their children's education and have programs and resources in place to reach out to parents who may feel less connected to the school. (self-study, teacher interviews, teachers, parents, department leaders, school leadership, school support staff, school board)

The school develops and maintains many productive community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning. In the Endicott survey, 81 percent of parents feel that the

school has effective partnerships with parents and community organizations. The Westport Wellness Initiative, a \$1.2 million grant, awarded to the physical education department, partners the department with five major community-based organizations: Wakeman Town Farm, the First Selectman's Office, Chartwells, the Westport/Weston Health District, and the Westport superintendent's office. Additional collaborations with the local YMCA, fitness clothing and equipment stores, a local yoga studio, a local aquatic activities center, and the Westport Police Department have enhanced the collaboration made possible by this grant. Staples High School staff effectively collaborates with various town organizations and agencies, including the department of human services, police and fire departments, youth commission, and parks and recreation. Staples High School maintains a productive partnership with local businesses. The vast majority of seniors pursue a career interest or service opportunity through the senior internship program, benefiting from the hands-on learning experience as well as giving back to the businesses and organizations themselves. Students have had experiences on the local, national, and global scale. Through a variety of planned programs and activities, parents are given opportunities to become aware of as well as actively involved in the day-to-day life of the school. For example, the guidance department holds meetings on all aspects of high school and post-high school life. These meetings are also recorded and uploaded to YouTube for those who cannot attend. A primary focus of the guidance department is post-high school planning. Staples High School counselors are provided with a professional development budget to travel to visit college campuses nationwide, further cultivating meaningful relationships with admissions representatives. Each year, the college and career center staff coordinates a trip for students to Norwalk Community College and local technical schools in order to broaden exposure to available options. Higher education partnerships have been established with the University of Connecticut through the early college experience. This program allows students to earn college credit by taking courses at Staples High School. Currently, these courses are only available in the world languages department. Staples High School has built strong relationships with Fairfield, Sacred Heart, and Yale Universities, enabling their students to take courses at these local institutions, as

well. Additionally, Staples High School has built a relationship with the Hwa Chong Institute in Singapore where they collaborate on projects for the International Science Symposium, and have decided to do a comparative study of curricula between the two schools. Therefore, Staples High School maintains productive community, business, and higher education partnerships that support student learning to ensure that all students achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations. (self-study, Endicott survey, parents, school leadership, central office personnel, teachers, students, school board, department leaders, school board)

Commendations

1. The commitment of the Westport community in providing dependable and full funding for a wide range of school programs and services
2. The formal plan that ensures the maintenance and repair of the school building and equipment
3. The cleanliness of the school on a daily basis
4. The implementation and use of the School Dude system
5. The ongoing program revisions that include rigorous course offerings and long-range plans
6. The Bring Your Own Device initiative and technology support for the students who do not have a device
7. The support of the school site and plant for the delivery of high quality school programs and services
8. The inclusive process for budget development that involves the faculty and building administrators
9. The engagement of all parents and families including those who have been less connected with the school as partners in the education of students
10. The collaborations and partnerships with local, national, and global connections
11. The partnership with Hwa Chong Institute that supports global student learning

Recommendations

1. Complete and take action on the findings of the study for the locker room renovations and the additional space that may be required as course offerings increase

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 Staples 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 Staples 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 93. 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. The chair and team members wish to thank the Staples school community for its hospitality and for doing everything possible to facilitate the work of the visiting committee.

**Staples High School
NEASC Accreditation Visit
October 25-28, 2015**

Visiting Committee

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| <p>Joseph A. Damplo, Chair New England Association of Schools and Colleges Retired Director of Media Services Burlington, MA 01803</p> <p>Don A. Wilson, Assistant Chair New England Association of Schools and Colleges Retired Assistant Principal Regional School District #8 Burlington, MA 01803</p> <p>Marvin Tyson Warren Harding High School 1734 Central Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06610</p> <p>Jamie Rowland Torrington High School 50 Major Besse Drive Torrington, CT 06790</p> <p>Julie Chevan Amity Senior Regional High School 25 Newton Road Woodbridge, CT 06525</p> <p>Abdoulaye Salami James Hillhouse High School 480 Sherman Parkway New Haven, CT 06511</p> <p>Mary Lou Devine Stonington High School 176 South Broad Street Pawcatuck, CT 06379</p> <p>Ralph Franco Masuk High School 1014 Monroe Turnpike Monroe, CT 06468</p> | <p>Michael McNamara Ridgefield High School 700 North Salem Road Ridgefield, CT 06877</p> <p>Amy Korn Wilton High School 395 Danbury Road Wilton, CT 06897</p> <p>Scott Detrick Cheshire Public Schools 29 Main Street Cheshire, CT 06410</p> <p>Sean Tomany University High School of Science and Engineering 351 Mark Twain Drive Hartford, CT 06112</p> <p>Sebastiani Szilagyi Wethersfield High School 411 Wolcott Hill Road Wethersfield, CT 06109</p> <p>Jill LaPlante Amity Senior Regional High School 25 Newton Road Woodbridge, CT 06525</p> <p>Joseph LaPrad Brien McMahan High School 300 Highland Avenue Norwalk, CT 06854</p> <p>Dorothy Fontana Southington High School 720 Pleasant Street Southington, CT 06489</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

Staples High School

Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

Core Values, Beliefs, and Learning Expectations

Commendations

1. The dynamic, collaborative, and inclusive process that was used to involve stakeholders in crafting the school's statement of core values and beliefs
2. The extensive use of current research-based best practices in the development of the school's statement of core values and beliefs
3. The community-wide commitment to the core values and beliefs of inspiring learning, fostering integrity and nurturing empathy
4. The creation of challenging and measurable 21st century learning expectations that address academic competencies
5. The high degree of school community support for the four domains of the Westport 2025 Lens
6. The active reflection of the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations in the school's safe, positive and respectful culture
7. The emphasis upon and support for teachers to be learners as a school and community priority

Recommendations

1. Identify and define 21st century learning expectations in the area of civic and social competencies
2. Create school-wide analytic rubrics for each of the school's 21st century learning expectations
3. Identify acceptable levels of achievement for each of the school's 21st century learning expectations
4. Collect and use data to review and revise further the core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations

Curriculum

Commendations

1. The beginning and early ongoing efforts to align the curriculum to the 21st century learning expectations in the Westport 2025 Lens
2. The input of units of study with essential questions, concepts, contents, and skills into the Atlas curriculum mapping software
3. The numerous and evolving opportunities for application of knowledge, inquiry and problem-solving, higher order thinking and authentic learning opportunities
4. The school's commitment to informed and ethical use of technology in the curriculum
5. The effective vertical curriculum coordination
6. The provision of sufficient staffing levels to fully implement curriculum co-curricular learning opportunities
7. The provision of sufficient instructional materials, technology, equipment, supplies, facilities, and library/media center resources to fully implement the curriculum and co-curricular programs
8. The provision of sufficient personnel and financial resources for collaborative development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum

Recommendations

1. Formalize the collection and review of data related to the curriculum to ensure that all students practice and achieve each of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Incorporate instructional strategies and assessment practices into the common curriculum template
3. Develop and implement a plan to more formally align the written and taught curriculum
4. Develop and implement a plan to promote more interdisciplinary learning
5. Develop and implement a plan to provide more formal time for collaboration for the development, evaluation, and revision of the curriculum

Instruction

Commendations

1. The instructional practices that are examined to ensure consistency with the school's core values, beliefs, and 21st century learning expectations
2. The instruction that is personalized
3. The instruction that compels students to participate as active and self-directed learners
4. The instruction that emphasizes and engages students in inquiry, problem-solving, and higher order thinking
5. The instruction that provides opportunities for students to apply knowledge and skills to authentic tasks
6. The instruction that engages students in self-assessment and reflection
7. The instruction that is enhanced through the integration of technology into the classroom
8. The teachers' use of formative assessment during instructional time to adjust their instructional practice to meet individual student needs
9. The ability and willingness of teachers to strategically differentiate instructional practices to meet the needs of diverse learners
10. The purposeful organization of group learning activities

11. The ability to provide additional support and alternative strategies to support students with diverse learning needs within the regular classroom
12. The teachers' informal examination of student work to improve instruction
13. The teachers' use of feedback from a variety of sources to adjust and improve instructional techniques
14. The teachers' eagerness to examine current research and use that research to change instructional strategies to improve student learning
15. The teachers' commitment to engaging in professional discourse focused upon instructional practice
16. The teachers' efforts to maintain expertise in their content area and in content-specific instructional practices

Recommendations

1. Increase opportunities for teachers to engage students in cross-disciplinary activities and lessons to support student achievement of the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Create and implement a formal process to systematically review student work and data from both formative and summative assessments to improve instructional practices
3. Create and implement a process to obtain parent feedback to improve instructional practices

Assessment of and for Student Learning

Commendations

1. The parent and student awareness of the Westport Lens and the 21st century learning expectations
2. The use of course-specific rubrics given prior to summative assessment
3. The ongoing professional conversation about school-wide assessment strategies
4. The ongoing departmental efforts to improve assessments and to increase consistency of practice
5. The creation of a committees to discuss grading and reporting practices throughout the school

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a formal process based upon school-wide analytic rubrics to assess school and individual student progress in achieving the school's 21st century learning expectations
2. Develop and implement a plan to consistently communicate the school's applicable 21st century learning expectations prior to each unit of study across all departments
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure consistency in common assessments
4. Develop and implement a plan to use formative assessment consistently across all courses
5. Develop and implement a formal plan so that teachers and administrators, individually and collaboratively, examine a range of evidence of student learning, including student work, common course and 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, and survey data from current students and alumni to revise curriculum and improve instructional practice.

School Culture and Leadership

Commendations

1. The school community's positive learning environment that ensures high expectations for learning in a safe, respectful, and supportive climate that fosters ownership and pride
2. The student code of conduct that clearly outlines school rules and student expectations
3. The creation of various committees that involve parents, students, and teachers in the decision-making process
4. The establishment and implementation of a wide variety of methods to recognize and celebrate student accomplishments
5. The wide variety of course offerings that allows students opportunities to access heterogeneous classes
6. The evaluation system that is beneficial to improving instruction and student learning
7. Student load and class size that enable teachers to meet the learning needs of individual students
8. The ongoing collaboration between the principal and the other building leaders that is constructive in achieving the core values, beliefs and 21st century learning expectations
9. The ability of the professional staff ability to create and implement new courses based upon their students' needs and interests

Recommendations

1. Investigate and provide ways to support more formalized collaboration among faculty
2. Create professional development opportunities for teachers that provide regular teacher input in the identification of the topics
3. Develop and implement the proposed plan for a formal advisory program or process

School Resources for Learning

Commendations

1. The broad spectrum of coordinated and directive intervention strategies to support all students, including identified and at-risk students
2. The multiple methods of disseminating information to ensure that those families most in need have access to available support services
3. The use of a wide range of technology to deliver coordinated service programs
4. The delivery of a comprehensive program of counseling services to meet the needs of students and parents
5. The counseling services that meet regularly with students to provide personal, academic, career, and college counseling
6. The health services' delivery of preventative health and direct intervention services
7. The use of ongoing, relevant data, including feedback from the school community by health services, to improve services and ensure each student achieves the school's 21st century learning expectations
8. The active engagement of the library/media staff in the implementation of the school's curriculum
9. The provision of a wide range of materials, technologies, and services in the library/media center that support the school's curriculum and student and staff personal interests
10. The availability of the library/media facility which is staffed for students and teachers before, during, and after school

11. The collaboration of support services and teachers, counselors, targeted services, and other support staff to achieve the school's 21st century learning expectations

Recommendation

1. Develop and implement a method for the use of ongoing , relevant assessment data, including feedback from the community to improve resources and services provided by counseling services
2. Develop and implement a method for conducting ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, to improve resources and services provided by library media services
3. Develop and implement a method for performing ongoing assessment using relevant data, including feedback from the school community, in order to improve resources and services provided by special education services

Community Resources for Learning

Commendations

1. The commitment of the Westport community in providing dependable and full funding for a wide range of school programs and services
2. The formal plan that ensures the maintenance and repair of the school building and equipment
3. The cleanliness of the school on a daily basis
4. The implementation and use of the "School Dude" system
5. The ongoing program revisions that include rigorous course offerings and long-range plans
6. The "Bring Your Own Device" initiative and technology support for the students who do not
7. have a device
8. The support of the school site and plant for the delivery of high quality school programs and services
9. The inclusive process for budget development that involves the faculty and building administrators
10. The engagement of all parents and families including those who have been less connected with the schools as partners in the education of the students
11. The collaborations and partnerships with local, national, and global connections
12. The partnership with Hwa Chong Institute that supports global student learning

Recommendations

1. Complete and take action on the findings of the study for the locker room renovations and the additional space that may be required as course offerings increase